TRAVELS IN THE UPPER EGYPTIAN DESERTS

ARTHUR E.
P. WEIGALL

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN
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Travels in the
Upper Egyptian Deserts

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The head of Wady Gatâr.—Page 100.

Frontispiece.

Travels in the Upper Egyptian Deserts

BY

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TO

SIR GASTON MASPERO, K.C.M.G.,

ETC., ETC., ETC.,

DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES, EGYPT,

THIS BOOK IS

RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

Some of the chapters in this book have appeared as articles in 'Blackwood's Magazine.' The various journeys here recorded have been made in the ordinary course of the work of inspection, and have been reported in the usual official manner. These less technical descriptions have been written in leisure hours, and the illustrations here published are selected from a large number of photographs and drawings rapidly made by the wayside. The journey to Wady Hammamât and Kossair was made in the company of three painters, Mr Charles Whymper, Mr Walter Tyndale, and Mr Erskine Nicol, to whom my thanks are due, as also they are to Mr John Wells, with whom I travelled to Gebel Dukhân. I am indebted to Prof. Sayce and Mr Seymour de Ricci for several notes on the Greek inscrip-

tions at Wady Abâd. On some of the journeys I was accompanied by Mahmoud Effendi Rushdy and Mahmoud Effendi Muhammed, Inspectors of the Department of Antiquities, whose assistance was valuable.

ARTHUR E. P. WEIGALL.

LUXOR,
UPPER EGYPT.

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Travels in the Upper Egyptian Deserts.

I.

THE EASTERN DESERT AND ITS INTERESTS.

I KNOW a young man who declares that after reading a certain explorer's description of a journey across the burning Sahara, he found to his amazement that his nose was covered with freckles. The reader will perhaps remember how, on some rainy day in his childhood, he has sat over the fire and has read sea-stories and dreamed sea-dreams until his lips, he will swear, have tasted salt. Alas, one's little agility in the art of narration is wholly inadequate for the production, at this time of life, of any such phenomena upon the gentle skins of those who chance to read these pages. Were one a master-maker of literature, one might herewith lead the imaginative so

straight into the boisterous breezes of Egypt, one might hold them so entranced in the sunlight which streams over the desert, that they would feel, wherever they might be seated, the tingling glow of the sun and the wind upon their cheeks, and would hold their hands to their eyes as a shelter from the glare. The walls of their rooms would fall flat as those of Jericho; and outside they would see the advancing host of the invaders —the sunshine, the north wind, the scudding clouds, the circling eagles, the glistening sand, the blue shadows, and the rampant rocks. And the night closing over the sack of their city, they would see the moonlight, the brilliant stars, the fluttering bats, the solemn owls; and they would hear the wailing of the hyænas and the barking of the dogs in the distant camps. If one only possessed the ability, one might weave such a magic carpet for those who knew how to ride upon it, that, deserting the fallen Jericho of their habitation, they would fly to the land of the invaders which they had seen, and there they would be kept as spell-bound and dazzled by the eyes of the wilderness as ever a child was dazzled by a tale of the sea.

But with this ability lacking it is very doubtful whether the reader will be able to appreciate the

writer's meaning; and, without the carpet, it is a far cry from Upper Egypt, where these words are written, to the fireside where they are read. Nevertheless I will venture to give an account here of some journeys made in the Upper Egyptian desert, in the hope rather of arousing interest in a fascinating country than of placing on record much information of value to science; although the reader interested in Egyptian archæology will find some new material upon which to speculate.

The Upper Egyptian desert is a country known only to a very few. The resident, as well as the visitor, in Egypt raises his eyes from the fertile valley of the Nile to the bare hills, and lowers them once more with the feeling that he has looked at the wall of the garden, the boundary of the land. There is, however, very much to be seen and studied behind this wall; and those who penetrate into the solitudes beyond will assuredly find themselves in a world of new colours, new forms, and new interests. In the old days precious metal was sought here, ornamental stone was quarried, trade-routes passed through to the Red Sea, and the soldiery of Egypt, and later of Rome, marched from station to station amidst its hills. The desert as one sees it now is, so to speak, peopled with the

ghosts of the Old World; and on hidden hill-slopes or in obscure valleys one meets with the remains of ancient settlements scattered through the length and breadth of the country.

The number of persons who have had the energy to climb the garden wall and to wander into this great wilderness is so small that one might count the names upon the fingers. Lepsius, the German Egyptologist, passed over some of the routes on which antiquities were to be met with; Golénischeff, the Russian Egyptologist, checked some of his results; Schweinfurth, the German explorer, penetrated to many of the unknown localities, and mapped a great part of the country; Bellefonds Bey, the Director-General of Public Works in Egypt under Muhammed Aly, made a survey of the mineral belt lying between the river and the Red Sea; and during the last score of years various prospectors and miners have visited certain points of interest to them. The Government Survey Department is now engaged in mapping this Eastern Desert, and two most valuable reports have already been published; while for a few years there existed a Mines Department, whose director, Mr John Wells, made himself acquainted with many of the routes and most of the mining centres. Thus, most of

the journeys here to be recorded have not been made over absolutely new ground; though, except for the expert reports of the Survey Department and some papers by Schweinfurth, it would be a difficult matter to unearth any literature on the subject. In describing these journeys, however, one is often enabled to indulge in the not unpleasing recollection that one is writing of places which no other European eyes have seen.

Those who have travelled in Egypt will not need to be told how the Nile, flowing down from the Sudan to the distant sea, pushes its silvery way through the wide desert: now passing between the granite hills, now through regions of sandstone, and now under the limestone cliffs. A strip of verdant cultivated land, seldom more than six or eight miles wide, and often only as many yards, borders the broad river; and beyond this, on either side, is the desert. In Upper Egypt one may seldom take an afternoon's ride due east or due west without passing out either on to the sun-baked sand of a limitless wilderness or into the liquid shadows of the towering hills. For the present we are not concerned with the western desert, which actually forms part of the great Sahara, and one's back may therefore be turned upon it.

Eastwards, behind the hills or over the sand, there is in most parts of the country a wide undulating plain, broken here and there by the limestone outcrops. Here the sun beats down from a vast sky, and the traveller feels himself but a fly crawling upon a brazen table. In all directions the desert stretches, until, in a leaden haze, the hot sand meets the hot sky. The hillocks and points of rock rise like islands from the floods of the mirage in which they are reflected; and sometimes there are clumps of withered bushes to tell of the unreality of the waters.

The scenery here is often of exquisite beauty; and its very monotony lends to it an interest when for a while the grouping of the hills ceases to offer new pictures and new harmonies to the eye. Setting out on a journey towards the Red Sea one rides on camel-back over this rolling plain, with the sun bombarding one's helmet from above and the wind charging it from the flank; and, as noonday approaches, one often looks in vain for a rock under which to find shade. Naturally the glaring sand is far hotter than the shady earth under the palms in the cultivation; but the stagnant, dusty, fly-filled air of the groves is not to be compared with the clear atmosphere up in

the wilderness. There are no evil odours here, breeding sickness and beckoning death. The wind blows so purely that one might think it had not touched earth since the gods released it from the golden caverns. The wide ocean itself has not less to appeal to the sense of smell than has the fair desert.

Descending from the camel for lunch, one lies on one's back upon the sand and stares up at the deep blue of the sky and the intense whiteness of a passing cloud. Raising oneself, the Nile valley may still be seen, perhaps, with its palms floating above the vaporous mirage; and away in the distance the pale cliffs rise. Then across one's range of sight a butterfly zigzags, blazing in the sunlight; and behind it the blue becomes darker and the white more extreme. Around one, on the face of the desert, there is a jumbled collection of things beautiful: brown flints, white pebbles of limestone, yellow fragments of sandstone, orange-coloured ochre, transparent pieces of gypsum, carnelian and alabaster chips, glittering quartz. Across the clear patches of sand there are all manner of recent footprints, and the incidental study of these is one of the richest delights of a desert journey. Here one may see the four-pronged footprints of a wagtail, and there the

larger marks of a crow. An eagle's and a vulture's footmarks are often to be observed, and the identification of those of birds such as the desert partridge or of the cream-coloured courser is a happy exercise for one's ingenuity. Here the light, wiggly line of a lizard's rapid tour abroad attracts the attention, reminding one of some American globe-trotter's route over Europe; and there footprints of the jerboa are seen leading in short jumps towards its hole. Jackals or foxes leave their dainty pad-marks in all directions, and one may sometimes come across the heavy prints of a hyæna, while it is not unusual to meet with those of a gazelle.

In the afternoon one rides onwards, and perhaps a hazy view of the granite hills may now be obtained in the far distance ahead. The sun soon loses its strength, and shines in slanting lines over the desert, so that one sees oneself in shadow stretched out to amazing lengths, as though the magnetic power of night in the east were already dragging in the reluctant darknesses to its dark self. Each human or camel footprint in the sand is at this hour a basin filled with blue shade, while every larger dent in the desert's surface is brimful of that same blue; and the colour is so opaque that an Arab lying therein

clad in his blue shirt is almost indistinguishable at a distance. Above one the white clouds go tearing by, too busy, too intent, it would seem, on some far-off goal to hover blushing around the sun. The light fades, and the camp is pitched on the open plain; and now one is glad to wrap oneself in a large overcoat, and to swallow the hot tea which has been prepared over a fire of the dried scrub of the desert.

The nights in the desert are as beautiful as the days, though in winter they are often bitterly cold. With the assistance of a warm bed and plenty of blankets, however, one may sleep in the open in comfort; and only those who have known this vast bedroom will understand how beautiful night may be. If one turns to the east, one may stare at Mars flashing red somewhere over Arabia, and westwards there is Jupiter blazing above the Sahara. One looks up and up at the expanse of star-strewn blue, and one's mind journeys of itself into the place of dreams before sleep has come to conduct it thither. The dark desert drops beneath one; the bed floats in mid-air, with planets above and below. Could one but peer over the side, earth would be seen as small and vivid as the moon. But a trance holds the body inactive, and the eyes are fixed upon the

space above. Then, quietly, a puff of wind brings one down again to realities as it passes from darkness to darkness. Consciousness returns quickly and gently, points out the aspect of the night, indicates the larger celestial bodies, and as quickly and gently leaves one again to the tender whispers of sleep.

When there is moonlight there is more to carry the eye into the region of dreams on earth than there is in the heavens; for the desert spreads out around one in a silver, shimmering haze, and no limit can be placed to its horizons. The eye cannot tell where the sand meets the sky, nor can the mind know whether there is any meeting. In the dimness of coming sleep one wonders whether the hands of the sky are always just out of reach of those of the desert, whether there is always another mile to journey and always another hill to climb; and, wondering, one drifts into unconsciousness. At dawn the light brings one back to earth in time to see the sun pass up from behind the low hills. In contrast to the vague night the proceeding is rapid and business-like. The light precedes its monarch only by half an hour or so; and ere the soft colours have been fully appreciated, the sun appears over the rocks and flings a sharp

In the Desert. The Author is seen on the near camel.

On the edge of the Eastern Desert.—Page 30.

beam into the eyes of every living thing, so that in a moment the camp is stirred and awakened.

During the second or third day's ride one generally enters the granite regions, and one is lost amidst the intricate valleys which pass between the peaks of the hills. Here one may find plenty of shelter from the sun's rays in the shadow of the cliffs; and as the camel jogs along over the hard gravel tracks, or as one sits for refreshment with the back propped against a great grey boulder, the view which is to be enjoyed is often magnificent. On the one side the dark granite, porphyry, or breccia rocks rise up like the towered and buttressed walls of some fairy-tale city; while on the other side range rises behind range, and a thousand peaks harmonise their delicate purples and greys with the blue of the sky. When the sun sets these lofty peaks are flushed with pink, and, like mediators between earth and heaven, carry to the dark valleys the tale of a glory which one cannot see. There is usually plenty of scrub to be found in the valleys with which to build the evening fires, and with good luck one might replenish the food-supplies with the tender flesh of the gazelle. Every two or three days one may camp beside a well of pure water, where the camels

may drink, and from which the portable tanks may be refilled.

Near these wells there are sometimes a few Bedwin to be found tending their little herds of goats: quiet, harmless sons of the desert, who generally own allegiance to some Shêkh living in the Nile valley. One's guides and camel-men exchange greetings with them, and pass the latest news over the camp fires. Often, however, one may journey for many days without meeting either a human being or a four-footed animal, though on the well-marked tracks the prints of goats and goatherds, camels and camel-men, are apparent.

No matter in what direction one travels, hardly a day passes on which one does not meet with some trace of ancient activity. Here it will be a deserted gold-mine, there a quarry; here a ruined fortress or town, and there an inscription upon the rocks. Indications of the present day are often so lacking, and Time seems to be so much at a standstill, that one slips back in imagination to the dim elder days. The years fall from one like a garment doffed, and one experiences a sense of relief from their weight. A kind of exhilaration, moreover, goes with the thought of the life of the men of thousands of years ago who lived amongst these changeless hills and valleys. Their days were so

full of adventure: they were beset with dangers. One has but to look at the fortified camps, the watch-towers on the heights, the beacons along the highroads, to realise how brave were the "olden times." One of the peculiar charms of these hills of the Eastern Desert is their impregnation with the atmosphere of a shadowy adventurous past. One's mind is conscious, if it may be so expressed, of the ghosts of old sights, the echoes of old sounds. Dead ambitions, dead terrors, drift through these valleys on the wind, or lurk behind the tumbled rocks. Rough inscriptions on these rocks tell how this captain or that centurion here rested, and on the very spot the modern traveller rests to ease the self-same aches and to enjoy the self-same shade before moving on towards an identical goal in the east.

On the third or fourth day after leaving the Nile one passes beneath the mountains, which here rise sometimes to as much as 6000 feet; and beyond these the road slopes through the valleys down to the barren Red Sea coast, which may be any distance from 100 to 400 miles from the Nile. Kossair is the one town on the coast opposite Upper Egypt, as it was also in ancient times; and Berenice, opposite Lower Nubia, was the only other town north of Sudan territory. Kossair does a

fast-diminishing trade with Arabia, and a handful of Egyptian coastguards is kept mildly busy in the prevention of smuggling. The few inhabitants of the Egyptian coast fish, sleep, say their prayers, or dream in the shade of their hovels until death at an extremely advanced age releases them from the boredom of existence. Those of them who are of Arab stock sometimes enliven their days by shooting one another in a more or less sporting manner, and by wandering to other and more remote settlements thereafter; but those of Egyptian blood have not the energy even for this amount of exertion. There is a lethargy over the desert which contrasts strangely with one's own desire for activity under the influence of the sun and the wind, and of the records of ancient toil which are to be observed on all sides. It must be that we of the present day come as the sons of a race still in its youth; and in this silent land we meet only with the worn-out remnant of a people who have been old these thousands of years.

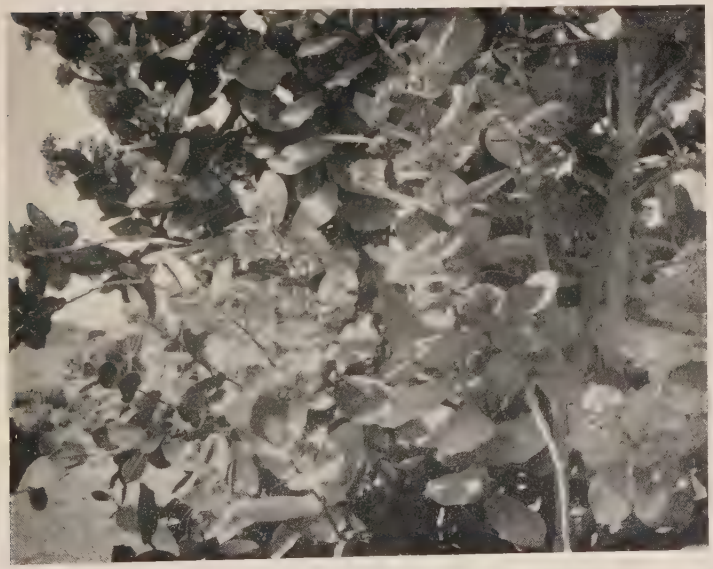
There was a threefold reason for the activities of the ancients in the Eastern Desert. Firstly, from Koptos, a city on the Nile not far from Thebes, to Kossair there ran the great trade-route with Arabia, Persia, and India; from Suez to Koptos there was a route by which the traders from Syria

often travelled; from Edfu to Berenice there was a trade-route for the produce of Southern Arabia and the ancient land of Pount; while other roads from point to point of the Nile were often used as short-cuts. Secondly, in this desert there were very numerous gold mines, the working of which was one of the causes which made Egypt the richest country of the ancient world. And thirdly, the ornamental stones which were to be quarried in the hills were in continuous requisition for the buildings and statuary of Egypt, Assyria, Persia, and Rome.

There is much to be said in regard to the gold-mining, but here space will not permit of more than the most cursory review of the information. Gold was used in Egypt at a date considerably prior to the beginning of written history in Dynasty I., and there are many archaic objects richly decorated with that metal. The situation of many of the early cities of the Nile valley is due solely to this industry. When two cities of high antiquity are in close proximity to one another on opposite banks of the river, as is often the case in Upper Egypt, one generally finds that the city on the western bank is the older of the two. In the case of Diospolis Parva and Khenoboskion, which stand opposite to one another, the former, on the west bank, is the more ancient and is the capital

of the province, and the latter, on the east bank, does not date earlier than Dynasty VI. Of Ombos and Koptos, the former, on the west bank, has prehistoric cemeteries around it; while the latter, on the east bank, dates from Dynasty I. at the earliest. Hieraconpolis and Eileithyiapolis stand opposite to each other, and the former, which is on the west bank, is certainly the more ancient. Of Elephantine and Syene, the latter, on the east bank, is by far the less ancient. And in the case of Pselchis and Baki (Kubbân), the former, on the west bank, has near it an archaic fortress; while the latter, on the east bank, does not date earlier than Dynasty XII. The reason of this is to be found in the fact that most of the early cities were engaged in gold-mining, and despatched caravans into the Eastern Desert for that purpose. These cities were usually built on the western bank of the river, since the main routes of communication from end to end of Egypt passed along the western desert. Mining stations had, therefore, to be founded on the eastern bank opposite to the parent cities; and these stations soon became cities themselves as large as those on the western shore. Thus the antiquity of the eastern city in each of these cases indicates at least that same antiquity for the mining of gold.

Desert vegetation. The Coloquintida plant.



A near view of the Coloquintida plant. Photographed in the Wady Abâd.

Throughout what is known as the old kingdom, gold was used in ever-increasing quantities, but an idea of the wealth of the mines will best be obtained from the records of the Empire. About 250,000 grains of gold were drawn by the Vizir Rekhmara in taxes from Upper Egypt, and this was but a small item in comparison with the taxes levied in kind. A king of a north Syrian state wrote to Amonhotep III., the Pharaoh of Egypt, asking for gold, and towards the end of his letter he says: "Let my brother send gold in very large quantities, without measure, and let him send more gold to me than he did to my father; for in my brother's land gold is as common as dust." To the god Amon alone Rameses III. presented some 26,000 grains of gold, and to the other gods he gave at the same time very large sums. In later times the High Priest of Amon was made also director of the gold mines, and it was the diverting of this vast wealth from the crown to the church which was mainly responsible for the fall of the Ramesside line.

A subject must here be introduced which will ever remain of interest to the speculative. Some have thought that the southern portion of this desert is to be identified with the Ophir of the Bible, and that the old gold-workings here are

none other than "King Solomon's Mines." In the Book of Kings one reads, "And King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon." Ophir cannot be identified with Arabia, since there is no gold there; and hence one may seek this land of ancient wealth at the southern end of the Eastern Egyptian Desert. If it is argued that the Hebrews would have found difficulties in carrying on mining operations unmolested in Egyptian territory, it may be contended on the other hand that King Solomon may have made some bargain with the Pharaoh: for example, that the former might mine in a certain tract of desert if the latter might cut timber in the Lebanon. The purchase of cedar-wood by the Egyptians is known to have taken place at about this period, payment in gold being made; and therefore it does not require an undue stretch of the imagination to suppose that the Hebrews themselves mined the gold. Again, at the time when King Solomon reigned in all his

glory in Palestine, the short-lived Pharaohs of Egypt sat upon tottering thrones, and were wholly unable to protect the Eastern Desert from invasion. The Egyptians often state that they encountered hostile forces in this land, and these may not always have consisted of Bedwin marauders.

No savant has accepted for a moment the various theories which place Ophir at the southern end of the African continent; and the most common view is that Solomon obtained his gold from the land of Pount, so often referred to in Egyptian inscriptions. This country is thought to have been situated in the neighbourhood of Suakin; but, as Professor Naville points out, it is a somewhat vague geographical term, and may include a large tract of country to the north and south of this point. One cannot imagine the Hebrews penetrating very far over the unknown seas to the perilous harbours of Middle Africa: one pictures them more easily huddled in the less dangerous ports of places such as Kossair or Berenice, or at farthest in that of Suakin. It is thus quite probable that some of the gold-workings in the desert here described are actually King Solomon's Mines, and that the country through which the reader will be conducted is the wonderful Ophir

itself. Certainly there is no one who can state conclusively that it is not.

Work continued with unabated energy during the later periods of Egyptian history, and the Persian, Greek, and Roman treasuries were filled consecutively with the produce of the mines. Several classical writers make reference to these operations, and sometimes one is told the actual name and situation of the workings. Diodorus gives a description of the mines in the Wady Alagi, and tells how the work was done. The miners wore a lamp tied to their forehead. The stone was carried to the surface by children, and was pounded in stone mortars by iron pestles. It was then ground to a fine powder by old men and women. This powdered ore was washed on inclined tables, the residue being placed in earthen crucibles with lead, salt, and tin for fluxes, and was there baked for five days. Agatharchides describes how the prisoners and negroes hewed out the stone, and, with unutterable toil, crushed it in mills and washed out the grains of gold. The Arabic historian, El Macrizi, states that during the reign of Ahmed ben Teilun there was great activity in the mining industry throughout the Eastern Desert, and Cufic inscriptions of this date found in the old workings confirm this statement.

One of the riding camels.

One of the camels.

From then, until modern times, however, little work was done; but in recent years, as the reader will no doubt know, many of the ancient workings have been reopened, and one must admit that if these are really to be regarded as King Solomon's Mines, that potentate must have had a somewhat lower opinion of Ophir than tradition indicates.

The other cause for the ancient activity in the Eastern Desert was, as has been said, the need of ornamental stone for the making of vases, statues, and architectural accessories. From the earliest times bowls and vases of alabaster, breccia, diorite, and other fine stones were used by the Egyptians, and the quarries must have already formed quite a flourishing industry. Soon the making of statuettes, and later of statues, enlarged this industry, and with the growth of civilisation it steadily increased. The galleries of the Cairo Museum, and those of European museums, are massed with statues and other objects cut in stone brought from the hills between the Nile and the Red Sea. The breccia quarries of Wady Hammamât were worked from archaic to Roman days; the Tourquoise Mountains, not far from Kossair, supplied the markets of the ancient world; white granite was taken from the hills of Um Etgal; there were two or three alabaster quarries in con-

stant use; and in the time of the Roman Empire the famous Imperial porphyry was quarried in the mountains of Gebel Dukhân. One may still see blocks of breccia at Hammamât, of granite at Um Etgal, or of porphyry at Dukhân, lying abandoned at the foot of the hills, although numbered and actually addressed to the Cæsars. The towns in which the quarrymen lived still stand in defiance of the years, and the traveller who has the energy to penetrate into the distant valleys where they are situated may there walk through streets untrodden since the days of Nero and Trajan, and yet still littered with the chippings from the dressing of the blocks.

In the old days the provisioning of the mining and quarrying settlements must have taxed the ingenuity even of the Egyptians; and the establishing of workable lines of communication with the distant Nile must have required the most careful organisation. The caravans bringing food were of great size, for there were often several thousands of hungry miners to be fed. In Dynasty VI. one reads of 200 donkeys and 50 oxen being used in the transport, and in Dynasty XI. 60,000 loaves of bread formed the daily requirements in food of one expedition. In late Ramesside times the food of an expedition of some 9000 men was

carried on ten large carts, each drawn by six yoke of oxen, while porters "innumerable" are said to have been employed. The families of the workmen generally lived on the spot, and these also had to be fed—a fact which is indicated, too, by an inscription which states that in one expedition each miner required twenty loaves of bread per diem.

Whenever this organisation broke down the consequences must have been awful. In this quarrying expedition in Ramesside times, consisting of 9000 men, 10 per cent of them died from one cause or another; and later writers speak of the "horrors" of the mines. In summer the heat is intense in the desert, and the wells could not always have supplied sufficient water. The rocks are then so hot that they cannot be touched by the bare hand, and one's boots are little protection to the feet. Standing in the sunlight, the ring has to be removed from one's finger, for the hot metal burns a blister upon the flesh. After a few hours of exercise there is a white lather upon the lips, and the eyes are blinded with the moisture which has collected around them; and thus what the quarrymen and miners must have suffered as they worked upon the scorching stones no tongue can tell.

In ancient Egyptian times the camel was regarded as a curious beast from a far country, and was seldom, if ever, put to any use in Egypt. Only three or four representations of it are now known, and it never occurs amongst any of the animals depicted upon the walls of the tombs, although bears, elephants, giraffes, and other foreign and rare creatures, are there shown. It was an Asiatic animal, and was not introduced into Egypt as an agent of transportation until the days of the ubiquitous Romans. Donkeys, oxen, and human beings were alone used in Pharaonic days for transporting the necessities of the labourers and the produce of their work; and probably the officials were carried to and fro in sedan-chairs. Even in Roman days there is nothing to show that the camel was very largely employed, and one may not amuse oneself too confidently with the picture of a centurion of the Empire astride the hump of the rolling ship of the desert.

Nowadays, of course, one travels entirely by camel in the desert. For an expedition of fifteen days or so one generally requires about a dozen camels all told, and one or two guides. Some of the animals carry the water in portable tanks; others are loaded with the tents and beds; and

others carry the boxes of tinned food and bottled drinks. The whole caravan rattles and bumps as it passes through the echoing valleys, and one's cook rises from amidst a clattering medley of saucepans and kettles which are slung around his saddle. The camels are obtained, at the rate of two to three shillings per diem, from some Shêkh, who holds himself more or less responsible for one's safety. With a steady steed and a good saddle there are few means of locomotion so enjoyable as camel-riding. Once the art is learnt it is never forgotten, and after the tortures of the first day or so of the first expedition, one need never again suffer from stiffness, though many months may elapse between the journeys. This preliminary suffering is due to one's inability at the outset to adjust the muscles to the peculiar motion; but the knowledge comes unconsciously after a while and ever remains.

One jogs along at the rate of about four and a half or five miles an hour, and some thirty miles a-day is covered with ease. The baggage camels travel at about three miles an hour. They start first, are passed during the morning, catch one up at the long rest for luncheon, are again passed during the afternoon, and arrive about an hour after the halt has been called. If possible, all

the camels drink every second day, but they are quite capable of going strongly for three or four days without water, and, when really necessary, can travel for a week or more through a land without wells.

While the Mines Department was in existence experiments were tried with automobiles and motor bicycles, which were by no means unsuccessful. Many of the main roads in the Eastern Desert pass over hard gravel, and a motor may be driven with safety over the unprepared camel tracks. If wells were sunk every ten or fifteen miles, there would be no dangers to be feared from a breakdown; and under favourable circumstances the journey from the Nile to the Red Sea might be accomplished in a morning. In the future one may picture the energetic tourist leaving his Luxor or Cairo hotel, whirling over the open plains where now one crawls, rushing through the valleys in which the camel-rider lingers, penetrating to the remote ruins and deserted workings, and emerging breathless on to the golden coast of the sea, to wave his handkerchief to his friends upon the decks of the Indian liners.

The time must surely come when the owners of automobiles in Egypt will sicken of the short roads around Cairo, and will venture beyond the

garden wall towards the rising sun. Whether it will be that the re-working of the gold mines and the quarries of ornamental stone will attract the attention of these persons to this wonderful wilderness, or that the enterprising automobilists will pave the way for the miners and the quarrymen, it is certain that some day the desert will blossom with the rose once more, and the rocks reverberate with the sound of many voices. Had I now in my two open hands pearls, diamonds, and rubies, how gladly would I give them—or some of them—for the sight of the misty mountains of the Eastern Desert, and for the feel of the sharp air of the hills! One looks forward with enthusiasm to the next visit to these unknown regions, and one cannot but feel that those who have it in their power to travel there are missing much in remaining within the walls of the little garden of the Nile. One hears in imagination the camels grunting as their saddles are adjusted; one feels the tingle of the morning air; and one itches to be off again, "over the hills and far away," into the solitary splendour of the desert.

II.

TO THE QUARRIES OF WADY HAMMAMÂT.

The so-called Breccia Quarries of Wady Hammamât are known to all Egyptologists by name, owing to the important historical inscriptions which are cut on the rocks of the valley. In reality the stone quarried there was mainly tuff, or consolidated volcanic ash ; and the real name of the locality is Wady Fowakhîeh, "the Valley of the Pots"; but such niceties do not trouble the average archæologist. Many of the inscriptions were copied by Lepsius, the late German Egyptologist, and further notes were made by Golénischeff, a Russian savant; but except for these two persons no Egyptologist has studied the quarries. They have been seen, however, on a few occasions by Europeans; and, as the caravan road to Kossair passes along the valley in which they are situated, they are known to all the natives who have crossed the desert at this point. In November 1907 I found it possible to visit this historic

site, and I was fortunate enough to obtain the companionship of three English friends who happened, very opportunely, to be in search of mild excitement at the time.

We set out from Luxor one morning in November, our caravan consisting in all of twenty-three camels, nine of which were ridden by our four selves, my servant, two guards, the Shêkh of the camelmen, and the guide, while fourteen were loaded with the three tents, the baggage, and the water-tanks, and were tended by a dozen camelmen who made the journey mainly on foot. Our road led eastwards from Luxor past the temple of the goddess Mut at Karnak, reflected in its sacred lake, and so along the highroad towards the rising sun. The day was cool, and a strong invigorating breeze raced past us, going in the same direction. Before us, as we crossed the fields, the sunlit desert lay stretched behind the soft green of the tamarisks which border its edge. Away to the right the three peaks of the limestone hills, which form the characteristic background of Thebes, rose into the sunlight; and to the left one could discern the distant ranges behind which we were to penetrate.

On reaching the desert we turned off northwards towards these hills, skirting the edge of the

cultivated land until we should pick up the ancient road which leaves the Nile valley some twenty miles north of Luxor. After luncheon and a rest in the shade of the rustling tamarisks the ride was continued, and we did not again dismount until, in the mid-afternoon, the Coptic monastery which is situated behind the town of Qus, and which marks the beginning of the road to the Red Sea, was reached; and here the camp was pitched. The quiet five-hours' ride of about twenty miles had sufficed to produce healthy appetites in the party, and, when the sun went down and the air turned cold, we were glad to attack an early dinner in the warmth of the mess-tent—one of the camel-boxes serving as a table, and the four saddles taking the place of chairs.

The next morning we set out soon after sunrise, and rode eastwards into the desert, which here stretched out before us in a blaze of sunlight. The road passed over the open gravel and sand in a series of parallel tracks beaten hard by the pads of generations of camels. Gebel el Gorn, "the Hill of the Horn," was passed before noon; and, mounting a ridge, we saw the wide plain across which we were to travel, intersected by a dry river-bed marked for its whole length by low bushes. Unable to find shade, and these bushes being still

1-3. Marks on a rock near Qurna.

4-6. On a rock near Qurna.

7. On a stone at Luxor. (Page 42

8, 9. Inside Kasr el Benat. (Page 35

10-12. On rocks opposite Kasr el Benat. (Page 34.

13, 14. Similar inscription opposite Kasr el Benat. (Page 34.

15, 20. Opposite Kasr el Benat. (Page 34.

16-19. Marks on rocks of Abu Kneh. (Page 34.

(Page 14.

1-3. Marks on a rock near Quft.

4-6. On a rock near Qus. Old kingdom drawings.

7. On a stone at Lagêta.—Page 32.

8, 9. Inside Kasr el Benât.—Page 33.

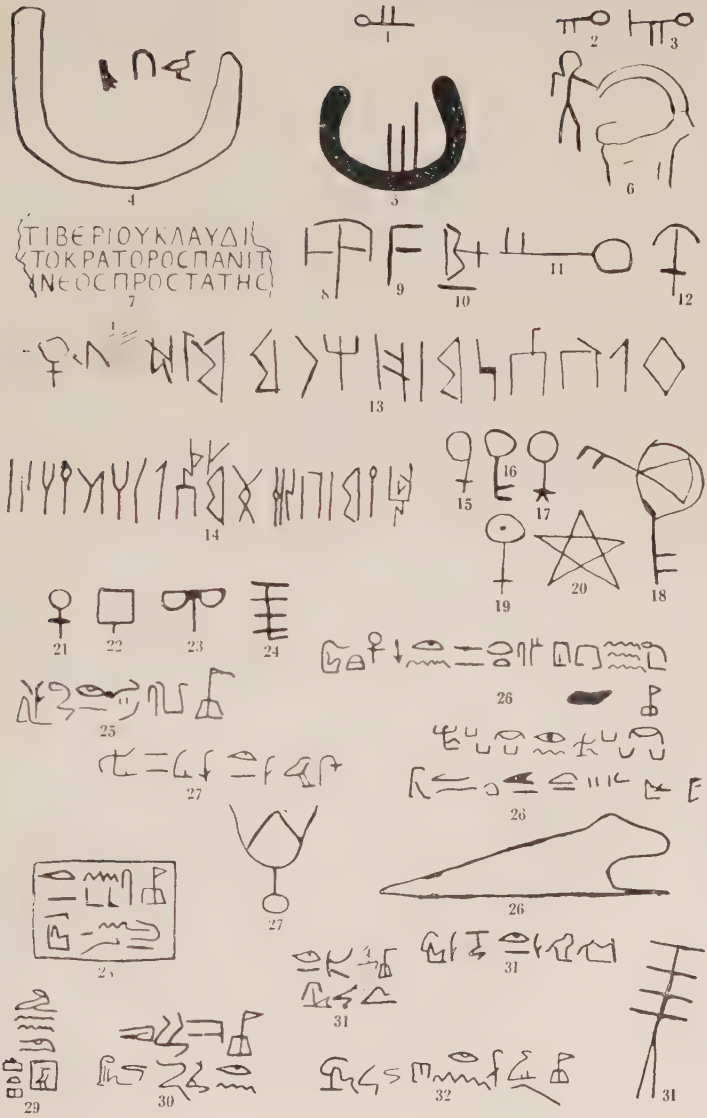
10-12. On rocks opposite Kasr el Benât.—Page 34.

13, 14. Sinaitic inscription opposite Kasr el Benât.—Page 34.

15-20. Opposite Kasr el Benât.—Page 34.

21-24. Marks on rocks of Abu Kueh.—Page 34.

25-32. Middle kingdom inscriptions, and marks at Abu Kueh.—Page 34.



Pl. iv.

some distance ahead, we lunched in the open sunlight at a spot where the wind, sweeping over the ridge, brought us all the coolness which we could desire.

We were now on the great mediæval highway from Qus to Kossair, by which the Arabian and Indian trade with Egypt was once conducted. The quarries of Hammamât lie on the main road to the sea. Nowadays the road starts from Keneh; in ancient times it started from Koptos, now called Quft, about ten miles south of Keneh; and in mediæval days it started from Qus, about ten miles south of Quft again. The roads from these different places join at the little oasis of Lagêta, which lies some four-and-twenty miles back from the Nile valley.

Riding into Lagêta in mid-afternoon the scene was one of great charm. The flat desert stretched around us in a haze of heat. In the far distance ahead the mountains of Hammamât could be seen, blue, misty, and indistinct. The little oasis, with its isolated groups of tamarisks, its four or five tall palms, its few acacias, and its one little crop of corn, formed a welcome patch of green amidst the barren wilderness; and the eyes, aching from the glare around, turned with gratitude towards the soft shadows of the trees. A large, and probably

ancient, well of brackish water forms the nucleus around which the few poor huts cluster; and two or three *shadufs*, or water-hoists, are to be seen here and there. A ruined, many-domed building which may have been a caravanserai, or perhaps a Coptic monastery, stands picturesquely under a spreading acacia; and near it we found the fragment of a Greek inscription in which, like a light emerging momentarily from the darkness of the past, the name of the Emperor Tiberius Claudius was to be seen. The few villagers idly watched us as we dismounted and walked through the settlement, too bathed in the languor of their monotonous life to bother to do more than greet with mild interest those of our camelmen whom they knew; and while we sat under the tamarisks to drink our tea, the only living thing which took any stock of us and our doings was a small green willow-wren in search of a crumb of food.

The camp was pitched to the east of the oasis, and at dawn we continued our way. The temperature was not more than 38° Fahrenheit when the sun rose, and we were constrained to break into a hard trot in order to keep warm. Two desert martins circled about us as we went, now passing under the camels' necks, and now whirling overhead; while more than once we put up a few

cream-coloured coursers, who went off with a whirr into the space around. After a couple of hours' riding over the open, hard-surfaced desert, we topped a low ridge and came into view of a ruined Roman station, called in ancient times the Hydreuma, and now known as Kasr el Benât, "the Castle of the Maidens." The building stands in a level plain around which the low hills rise, and to the east the distant Hammamât mountains form a dark background. From the outside one sees a well-made rectangular wall, and entering the doorway on the north side one passes into an enclosure surrounded by a series of small chambers, the roofs of which have now fallen in. In these little rooms the weary Roman officers and the caravan masters rested themselves as they passed to and fro between the quarries and the Nile; and in this courtyard, when haply the nights were warm, they sang their songs to the stars and dreamed their dreams of Rome. The building is so little ruined that one may picture it as it then was without any difficulty; and such is the kindness of Time that one peoples the place with great men and good, intent on their work and happy in their exile, rather than with that riff-raff which so often found its way to these outlying posts.

Across the plain, opposite the entrance to the

Hydreuma, there is a large isolated rock with cliff-like sides, upon which one finds all manner of inscriptions and rough drawings. Here there are two Sinaitic inscriptions of rare value and several curious signs in an unknown script, while Ababdeh marks and Arabic letters are conspicuous.

We mounted our camels again at about eleven o'clock, and rode towards the wall of the Medîk es-Salâm hills ahead, passing into their shadows soon after noonday. We halted for luncheon in the shade of a group of rocks, and our meal was enlivened by the presence of two butterflies which seemed out of place in the barren desert, and yet in harmony with the breezy, light-hearted spirit of the place. Early in the afternoon we rode on, but an hour had not passed when some obvious inscriptions on the rocks to the left of the track, opposite a point where the road bends sharply to the right, attracted my attention. These proved to date from the Middle Empire, about B.C. 2000, and no doubt marked a camp of that date. The names of various officials were given, and a prayer or two to the gods was to be read. Rounding the corner, we had no sooner settled ourselves to the camels' trot than another group of inscriptions on the rocks to the right of the path necessitated a further halt. Here there were two very important

graffiti of the time of Akhnaton; and considerable light is thrown by one of them upon the fascinating period of the religious revolution of that king. One sees three cartouches, of which the first is that of Queen Thiy, the second reads Amonhotep (IV.), and the third seems to have given the name Akhnaton; but both this cartouche and that of Thiy are erased. The three cartouches are placed together above the symbols of sovereignty, and below the rays of the sun's disk, thus showing that Akhnaton was but a boy of tender years under his mother's guidance when he first came to the throne, and that the Aton worship had already begun. It would be too long a matter to explain the significance of this inscription here, but those who are of an inquiring mind may turn to the article on this subject in the October number of 'Blackwood's Magazine' for 1907, where I have described how the recently found mummy of Akhnaton proved to be that of a very young man.

The shadows were lengthening when we once more mounted and trotted up the valley, which presently led into more open ground; but after half an hour's ride a second Roman station came into sight, and again the grumbling camels had to kneel. The building is much ruined, and is not of

great interest to those who have already seen the Hydreuma and other stations. As we continued the journey the sun set behind us, and in the growing moonlight the valley looked ghostly and wonderfully beautiful. The shapes of the rocks became indistinct, and one was hardly aware when the well known as Bir Hammamât was at last reached. This well lies in a flat, gravelly amphitheatre amidst the rugged hills, which press in on all sides. It is in all about six hours' ride—*i.e.*, twenty-eight or thirty miles—from Lagêta; but our several halts had spread the journey over twice that length of time. The well is circular and fairly large, and stones dropped into its pitch-dark depths seemed a long time in striking the water. A subterranean stairway, restored in recent years by a mining company, runs down at one side to the water's level; and at its doorway in the moonlight we sat and smoked until the baggage camels came up.

The next morning we rode up a valley which was now tortuous and narrow. This is the Wady Hammamât of the archæologist, and the Wady Fowakhîeh of the natives. Dark, threatening hills towered on either side, as though eager to prison for ever the deeds once enacted at their feet. One's voice echoed amongst the rocks, and

Under the tamarisks of the oasis of Lagêta.—Page 31.

Bir Hammamât, looking south.—Page 36.

the wind carried the sound down the valley and round the bend, adding to it its own quiet whispers. A ride of about half an hour's length brought us to some ruined huts where the ancient quarrymen had lived in the days of the Pharaohs. From this point onwards for perhaps a mile the rocks on either side are dotted with inscriptions, from which a part of the history of the valley may be learnt. The place is full of whispers. As the breeze blows round the rocks and up the silent water-courses it is as though the voices of men long since forgotten were drifting uncertainly by. One feels as though the rocks were peopled with insistent entities, all muttering the tales of long ago. Behind this great rock there is something laughing quietly to itself; up this dry waterfall there is a sort of whimpering; and here in this silent recess one might swear that the word to be silent had been passed around. It is only the wind and the effect of the contrast between the exposed and the still places sheltered by the rocks; but, with such a history as is writ upon its walls, one might believe the valley to be crowded with the ghosts of those who have suffered or triumphed in it.

Wady Fowakhîeh extends from the Bir Hammamât to the well known as Bir Fowakhîeh, which

lies in the open circus at the east end of the valley. Although the tuff quarried here is of a blue or olive-green colour, the surface of the rocks, except where they are broken, is a sort of chocolate-brown. One thus obtains an extraordinary combination of browns and blues, which with the flush of the sunset and the dim purple of the distant hill-tops forms a harmony as beautiful as any the world knows. The flat, gravel bed of the valley is from fifty to a hundred yards wide, and along this level surface run numerous camel-tracks, more or less parallel with one another. Besides the inscriptions there are other traces of ancient work: an unfinished shrine, and a sarcophagus, abandoned owing to its having cracked, are to be seen where the workmen of some five-and-twenty centuries ago left them; and here and there a group of ruined huts is to be observed.

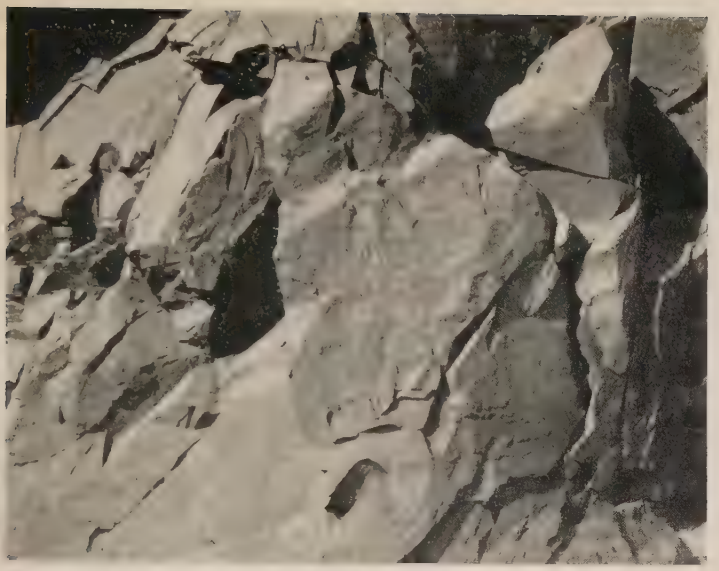
Amidst these relics of the old world our tents were pitched, having been removed from Bir Hammamât as soon as breakfast had been finished; and with camera, note-book, and sketching apparatus, the four of us dispersed in different directions, my own objective, of course, being the inscriptions. The history of Wady Fowakhîeh begins when the history of Egypt begins, and one

must look back into the dim uncertainties of the archaic period for the first evidences of the working of the quarries in this valley. Many beautifully made bowls and other objects of this tuff are found in the graves of Dynasty I., fifty-five centuries ago; and my friends and I, scrambling over the rocks, were fortunate enough to find in a little wady leading northwards from the main valley a large rock-drawing and inscription of this date. A "vase-maker" here offers a prayer to the sacred barque of the hawk-god Horus, which is drawn so clearly that one may see the hawk standing upon its shrine in the boat, an upright spear set before the door; and one may observe the bull's head, so often found in primitive countries, affixed to the prow; while the barque itself is shown to be standing upon a sledge in order that it might be dragged over the ground.

In Dynasties II. to IV. the objects in the museums show that the quarries were extensively worked, and in Dynasty V. one has the testimony of local inscriptions as well. An official under King Asesa, B.C. 2675, has left his name on the rocks on the south of the valley; and the name of another who lived in the reign of Unas, B.C. 2650, is to be seen there. Of the reign of Pepy I., B.C. 2600, of Dynasty VI., one has more definite

information. Scanning the rocks one reads of chief architects, master builders, assistant artisans, scribes, treasurers, ship-captains, and their families stationed at the quarries to procure stone for the ornamentation of the pyramid buildings of the king, which are still to be seen at Sakkâra, near Cairo; and these inscriptions mention a certain Thethi, who was the "master pyramid-builder of the king," and therefore was probably in charge of the expedition.

In the reign of Aty, B.C. 2400, a ship's captain named Apa came to procure stone for his master's pyramid; and with him were 200 soldiers and 200 workmen. King Imhotep, B.C. 2400, sent his son Zaty with 1000 labourers, 100 quarrymen, and 1200 soldiers, to obtain stone; and he supplied 200 donkeys and 50 oxen daily for its transport. But the first really interesting inscription on the rocks of the valley dates from Dynasty XI., B.C. 2050. Here an all too brief story is told by a great official named Henu, recording an expedition made by him to the distant land of Pount in the eighth year of the reign of Menthuhotep III. The king had ordered Henu to despatch a ship to Pount in order to bring fresh myrrh from that land of spices, and he had therefore collected an army of 3000 men. He set out from Koptos,



Cartouches of Sety II. on the rocks between Bir Hammamât and Wady Fowakhîeh.

Inscriptions on the rocks between Bir Hammamât and Wady Fowakhîeh.

travelled over the open desert to the little oasis of Lagêta, and so struck the road which we had followed. He seems to have had much consideration for his men, for he says, "I made the road a river, and the desert a stretch of field. I gave a leather bottle, a carrying pole, two jars of water, and twenty loaves of bread to each one of the men every day." When one considers that this means 60,000 loaves of bread per day, one's respect for the organising powers of the ancient Egyptians must be considerable. At Wady Fowakhîeh he seems to have organised some quarry works for the king, and presently he pushed on towards the Red Sea, digging wells as he went. The expedition, which will be recorded later, is then described; and Henu states that, on his return to Wady Fowakhîeh, he organised the transport of some five blocks of stone which were to be used for making statues.

In the second year of the reign of Menthuhotep IV., B.C. 2000,—so runs another long rock inscription,—the Vizier Amonemhat was sent to the quarries with an expedition of 10,000 men, consisting of miners, artificers, quarrymen, artists, draughtsmen, stone-cutters, gold-workers, and officials. His orders were to procure "an august block of the pure costly stone which is in this

mountain, for a sarcophagus, an eternal memorial, and for monuments in the temples." The presence of gold-workers indicates that the gold mines near Bir Fowakhîeh were also opened. Ancient workings are still to be seen near this well, and in recent times an attempt was made to reopen them, which, however, was not very successful. One must imagine this expedition as camping at that well—Bir Hammamât—where we had camped on the previous night, and as passing up the valley each day to and from the quarries. This was a tedious walk, and a nearer water-supply must have been much needed. One day there was a heavy fall of rain, which must have lasted several hours, for when it had ceased the sandy plain at the head of the valley was found to be a veritable lake of water. Rain is not at all a common occurrence in Upper Egypt. Even now the peasants are peculiarly alarmed at a heavy downpour; and in those far-off days the quarrymen were ready enough to see in the phenomenon a direct act of the great god Min, the patron of the desert. "Rain was made," says the inscription, "and the form of this god appeared in it; his glory was shown to men. The highland was made a lake, the water extending to the margin of the rocks." The presence of the water seems to have

dislodged an accumulation of sand which had formed over an ancient and disused well; and when the lake subsided the astonished labourers discovered its mouth, ten cubits in length on its every side. "Soldiers of old and kings who had lived aforetime went out and returned by its side; yet no eye had seen it." It was "undefiled, and had been kept pure and clean from the gazelle, and concealed from the Bedwin." If this well is, as I suppose, the Bir Fowakhîeh, it must have been a great boon to the workmen, for it is but a few minutes' walk from the quarries, and must have saved them that weary tramp down to the Bir Hammamât at the end of their hard day's work.

When the great stone for the lid of the sarcophagus had been prised out of the hillside, and had been toppled into the valley, another wonder occurred. Down the track there came running "a gazelle great with young, going towards the people before her, while her eyes looked backward, though she did not turn back." The quarrymen must have ceased their work to watch her as she ran along the hard valley, looking back with startled eyes as the shouts of the men assailed her. At last "she arrived at this block intended for the lid of the sarcophagus, it being still in its

place; and upon it she dropped her young, while the whole army of the king watched her." One can hear the quarrymen, as they clattered into the valley, shouting, "A miracle, a miracle!" and surrounded the incapacitated creature. The end of the tale is told briefly. "Then they cut her throat upon the block, and brought fire. The block descended to the Nile in safety."

Another inscription states that this sarcophagus lid was dragged down to the river by an army of 3000 sailors from the Delta, and that sacrifices of cattle, goats, and incense were constantly made in order to lighten the labour. It must have been an enormous block to drag along; for even after it was dressed into the required shape and size by the masons in Egypt, it was some 14 feet in length, 7 feet in width, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet in thickness. Two other blocks brought down from these quarries at about the same date are said to have been 17 feet in length, while a third was about 20 feet long.

In the reign of Amonemhat I. of Dynasty XII., B.C. 2000, an officer named Antef was sent to the quarries to procure a special kind of stone, so rare that "there was no hunter who knew the marvel of it, and none that sought it had found it." "I spent eight days," says Antef, "searching the hills

for it, but I knew not the place wherein it might be. I prostrated myself before Min, before Mut, before the goddess great in magic, and before all the gods of the highlands, burning incense to them upon the fire." At last, after almost giving up the search in despair, he found the required block one morning just as the sun had topped the dark hills of the valley, and while his men were just scattering in all directions to renew the search. Although so many centuries have passed since Antef found his stone, one feels, when one reads this inscription upon the rocks, that it was but yesterday; and one may picture the sunlit scene when, as he says, "the company were in festivity and the entire army was praising, rejoicing, and doing obeisance."

Under other kings of this dynasty one reads, as one walks up the valley, of works being carried on. One man quarried and carried down to the river ten blocks which were later converted into seated statues 8½ feet high. Another official speaks of his army of 2000 men which he had with him in this now desolate place; and a third has left an inscription reading, "I came to these highlands with my army in safety, by the power of Min, the Lord of the Highlands."

So the work continued from generation to

generation, and the quarrymen, as they sat at noon to rest themselves in the shade, could read around them the names of dead kings and forgotten officials carved upon the rocks, and could place their own names in the illustrious company. The troubled years of the Hyksos rule checked the quarrying somewhat; but in Dynasty XVIII. the labours were renewed, though unfortunately no long inscriptions have been left to illuminate the darkness of the history of the valley. An inscription of the time of Akhnaton is to be seen high up on the rocks, but other figures have been cut over it by Sety I.

Various kings of Dynasties XIX. and XX. are mentioned on the rocks; but the only important inscription dates from the second year of the reign of Rameses IV., B.C. 1165. It seems that this king, with a degree of energy unusual in a Pharaoh of this debased period, made a personal visit to the quarries. "He led the way to the place he desired; he went around the august mountain; he cut an inscription upon this mountain engraved with the great name of the king." This inscription is to be seen on the rocks of the valley, almost as fresh as when the scribes had written it. On his return to Egypt he organised an expedition for the purpose of quarrying the stone he had selected. A com-

4. Inscription at Abu Simbel.

5–12. Inscriptions and marks near Abu Simbel.

13, 14, 16. Inscriptions at Abu Simbel, [illegible] of

Page 55

15. Aramaic inscription at Abu Simbel.

17. Arabic graffiti and inscriptions in [illegible]

Wadi Fawakhir [illegible]

Pl. VII.

1. Inscription at Abu Kueh.

2, 3. Foreign inscriptions at Abu Kueh.

4. Inscription at Abu Kueh.

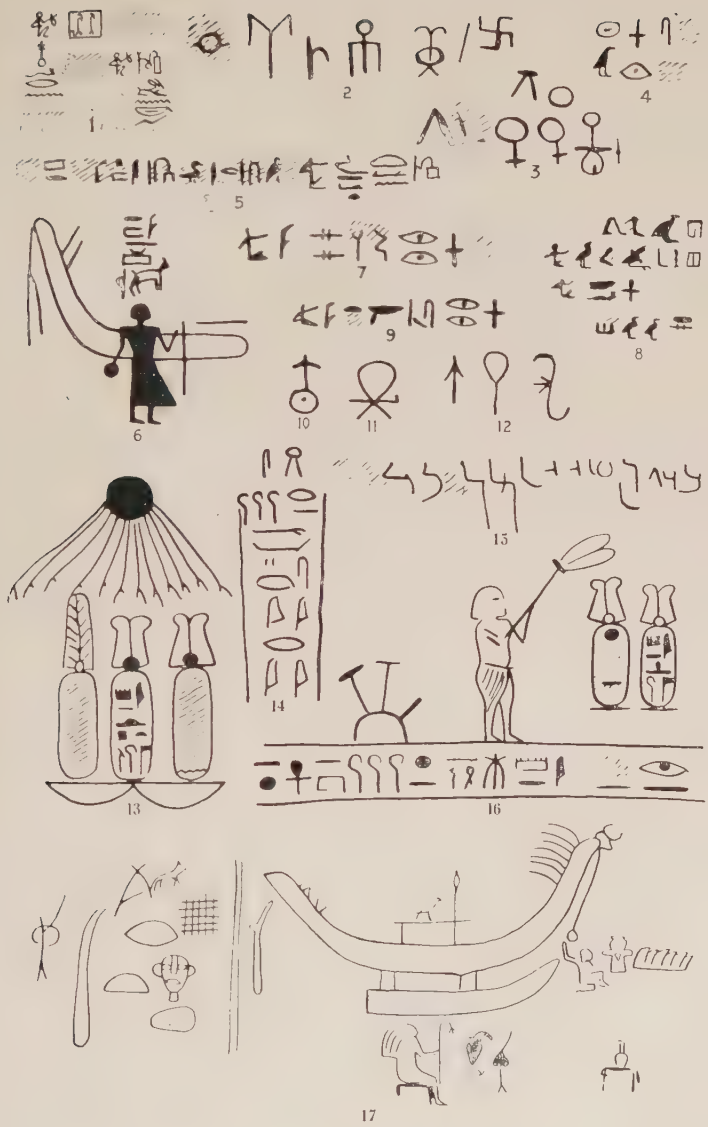
5-12. Inscriptions and marks near Abu Kueh.

13, 14, 16. Inscriptions at Abu Kueh, reign of Akhnaton.—Page 35.

15. Aramaic inscription at Abu Kueh.

17. Archaic drawing and inscription in a valley leading from Wady Fowakhîeh.—Page 39.

PL. VII.



Pl. vii.

plete list of the *personnel* of the expedition is recorded, and, as it gives one an idea of the usual composition of a force of this kind, I may be permitted to give it in some detail.

The head of the expedition was none other than the High Priest of Amon, and his immediate staff consisted of the king's butlers, the deputy of the army and his secretary, the overseer of the treasury, two directors of the quarry service, the court charioteer, and the clerk of the army lists. Twenty clerks of the army, or of the War Office as we would say, and twenty inspectors of the court stables were attached to this group. Under a military commandant there were 20 infantry officers and 5000 men, 50 charioteers, 200 sailors, and a mixed body of 50 priests, scribes, overseers, and veterinary inspectors. Under a chief artificer and three master quarrymen there were 130 stone-cutters and quarrymen ; while the main work was done by 2000 crown slaves and 800 foreign captives. Two draughtsmen and four sculptors were employed for engraving the inscriptions, &c. A civil magistrate with 50 police kept order amongst this large force, which altogether totalled 8362 men, not including, as the inscription grimly states, the 900 souls who perished from fatigue, hunger, disease, or exposure.

The supplies for this large expedition were transported in ten carts each drawn by six yoke of oxen; and there were many porters laden with bread, meat, and various kinds of cakes. The inscription then tells us of the sacrifices which were continuously made to the gods of the desert. "There were brought from Thebes the oblations for the satisfaction of the gods of heaven and earth. Bulls were slaughtered, calves were smitten, incense streamed to heaven, *shedeh* and wine was like a flood, beer flowed in this place. The voice of the ritual-priest presented these pure offerings to all the gods of the mountains so that their hearts were glad."

In this remote desert how easy it is to dream oneself back in the elder days! The valley, pressed close on either side by the rocks around which the whispers for ever wander, echoes once again with the ring of the chisels; and in the wind that almost ceaselessly rushes over the ancient tracks, one can see the fluttering garments of the quarrymen as they pass to and from their work. As we sat at the door of our tents in the cool of the afternoon, the present day seemed now as remote as the past had seemed before; and, when that great moment of sunset was approached, one almost felt it fitting to burn a pan of incense to

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the old gods of heaven and earth, as the officers of Rameses IV. had done.

The names of later kings, Shabaka, Taharka, Psametik, Nekau, Aahmes II., and others, look down at one from the rocks; and sometimes the date is precisely given, and the names of the officials are mentioned. During the Persian period the green tuff was in considerable demand for the making of those lifelike portrait statuettes so many of which are to be seen in the various museums; and the coarser tuff, which is practically breccia, was much used for shrines and sarcophagi. It is curious to see in this distant valley the names of the Persian kings, Cambyses, Darius I., Xerxes I., and Artaxerxes I., written in Egyptian hieroglyphs in the rock inscriptions, together with the year of their reigns in which the quarrying was undertaken. Nectanebo I. and II., B.C. 370 and B.C. 350, have left their names in the valley; and dating from this and the subsequent periods there are various Egyptian and Greek inscriptions.

In the reign of Ptolemy III., B.C. 240, a little temple was built near the Bir Fowakhîeh at the east end of the valley of the quarries. Wandering over this amphitheatre amidst the hills we came upon the remains of the little building, which had

been constructed of rough stones augmented by well-made basalt columns. It was dedicated to the god Min, the patron of the Eastern Desert; but as it was only about 12 feet by 22 in area the priests of the god could not have commanded the devotion of more than a few of the quarrymen. Near the temple there are three or four groups of ruined huts, nestling on the hillsides amongst the rocks; and here the quarrymen of the Ptolemaic and Græco-Roman ages dwelt, as the broken pottery indicates. There are many traces of ancient gold workings near by, and a ruined house of modern construction stands as a sad memorial of the unsuccessful attempt to reopen them. In the inscriptions of Dynasties XVIII.-XX. one reads of "the gold of Koptos," which must be the gold brought into Koptos from this neighbourhood; and at this later period the mines appear to have been worked. A very fine pink granite began to be quarried just to the east of this well in Roman days, and one may still see many blocks cut from the hillside which have lain there these two thousand years awaiting transport.

In Wady Fowakhîeh itself there are many blocks of tuff, addressed to the Cæsars, but never dispatched to them; nor is there anything in this time-forsaken valley which so brings the past

The camp in Wady Fowakhîeh, looking down from the hills on the north side. The camel tracks are seen passing along the valley.—Page 38.

Wady Fowakhîeh, looking east. The camel tracks will be noticed again.

before one as do these blocks awaiting removal to vanished cities. There are many Greek inscriptions to be seen, the majority being grouped together in a recess amidst the rocks on the south side of the valley. Here one reads of persons who worked for Tiberius, Nero, Domitian, and other emperors; and there are their drawings of men, animals, and boats before one, as fresh as when an hour at noon was whiled away in their making. From these the last days of the quarrying dates a causeway which passes up the hillside on the south of the valley, and which was intended to ease the descent of blocks quarried higher up. The Romans have also left watch-towers on the hill-tops, which indicate that peace did not always reign in the desert.

The night which closed in on us all too soon brought with it the silence of the very grave. The wind fell, and the whisperings almost ceased. The young moon which lit the valley seemed to turn all things to stone under its gaze; and not a sound fell from the camelmen or from the camels. The evening meal having been eaten and the pipes smoked, we quietly slipped into our beds; and when the moon had set behind the hills and absolute darkness had fallen upon the valley, one might have believed oneself as dead and as deep

in the underworld as the kings whose names were inscribed upon the black rocks around.

On the following morning we continued our journey eastwards towards the Red Sea, along the old trade route. This expedition forms a subject which will be treated by itself in the next chapter, and therefore one may here pass over the week occupied by the journey, and may resume the thread of the present narrative at the date when we set out from Wady Fowakhîeh on our homeward way. The day was already hot as we trotted down the valley and past the Bir Hammamât, where, by the way, we put up another family of cream-coloured coursers. A couple of hours' trotting brought us to a cluster of sandstone rocks on the north of the now open and wide road, these having been passed in the dusk on the outward journey. Here I found one or two inscriptions in unknown letters, a few Egyptian graffiti, and a little Græco-Roman shrine dedicated to the great god Min. On these rocks we ate our luncheon, and rested in the shade; and in the early afternoon we mounted once more, passing the second Roman station half an hour later. A ride of two and a half hours brought us to the Hydreuma about sunset, and here we halted to smoke a pipe and stretch our legs. Then in the moonlight we

rode on once more over the open desert, which stretched in hazy uncertainty as far as the eye could see. The oasis of Lagêta was reached at about seven o'clock, and, the night having turned cold, we were glad to find the camp fires already brightly burning and the kettle merrily boiling.

We were on the road again soon after sunrise, and, riding towards Koptos, about ten or twelve miles from Lagêta we passed another Roman enclosure now almost entirely destroyed. Our route now lay to the north of the hills of el Gorn, the south side of which we had seen on our outward journey; and after three and a half hours' riding we came into sight of the distant Nile valley. The thin line of green trees seemed in the mirage to be swimming in water, as though the period of the inundation were upon us again. At the point where this view is first obtained there are some low hills on the south side of the tracks, and in one of these there is a small red-ochre quarry. The sandstone is veined with ochre, and the quarry had been opened for the purpose of obtaining this material for the making of red paint; but whether the few red markings on the rocks are ancient or mediæval one cannot say. Here we ate an early luncheon, and about noon we rode on over the sun-bathed plain down to the cultiva-

tion. Leaving the desert our road passed between the fields towards the Nile; and by two o'clock we reached the picturesque village of Quft, which marks the site of the ancient Koptos. We spent the afternoon in wandering over the ruins of the once famous caravanserai, and in the evening we took the train back to Luxor.

Such are the quarries of Hammamât, and such is the road to them. It is a simple journey, and one able to be undertaken by any active person who will take the trouble to order a few camels from Keneh. There will come a time when one will travel to the quarries by automobile, for even the present road is hard-surfaced enough to permit of that form of locomotion, and with a little doctoring it will be not far from perfection. A place such as this wonderful valley, with its whispers and its echoes, seems to beckon to the curious to come, if only to be lost for awhile in the soothing solitudes and moved by the majestic beauty of the hills. To those interested in the olden days the rocks hold out an invitation which one is surprised to find so seldom responded to; but let any one feel for an hour the fine freedom of the desert, and see for an hour the fantasy of the hills, and that invitation will not again be so lightly set aside.

Abandoned sarcophagus on the hillside in Wady Fowakhîeh.—Page 38.

A typical valley near Wady Fowakhîeh.

On camel or automobile he will make his way over the ancient tracks to the dark valley of the quarries; and there he will remain entranced, just as we, until the business of life calls him back to the habitations of present-day men.

III.

THE RED SEA HIGHROAD.

In the reach of the Nile between Quft and Keneh, a few miles below Luxor, the river makes its nearest approach to the Red Sea, not more than 110 miles of desert separating the two waters at this point. From Quft, the ancient Koptos, to Kossair, the little seaport town, there runs the great highroad of ancient days, along which the Egyptians travelled who were engaged in the Eastern trade. It happened by chance that this route led through the Wady Fowakhîeh in which the famous quarries were situated; and in the last chapter I have recorded an expedition made to that place in 1907. From the quarries I set out with my three friends for the sea; and, as the route from the Nile to Wady Fowakhîeh has already been described, it now remains to record its continuation eastwards and our journeying upon it.

The history of this highroad is of considerable interest, for it may be said to be the most ancient

of the routes of which the past has left us any record; and its hard surface has been beaten down by the fall of feet almost continuously from the dawn of human things to the present day. It has been thought by some that a large element of the prehistoric inhabitants of the Nile valley came into Egypt by this road. Excavations at Quft (Koptos) have shown the city to date from Dynasty I., if not earlier; and the great archaic statues of Min, the god of the desert, one of which is to be seen at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, were here found. The ancient Egyptians always believed that the home of their ancestors was in the land of Pount, the region around Suakin; and since so many archaic remains have been found at Koptos, the terminus of a route which in historical times was sometimes used by persons travelling to Pount, it seems not unlikely that there was a certain infiltration of Pountites into Egypt by way of Kossair and Quft. These people travelling in ships along the coast, Arabians sailing from the eastern shores of the Red Sea, or Bedwin journeying by land from Sinai and Suez, may have passed over this road to trade with the inhabitants of Upper Egypt; but, on the other hand, there is no evidence to show that any extensive immigration or invasion took place. The coast of the Red Sea

is utterly barren, and the wells are few in number; and one could more readily imagine the prehistoric inhabitants of Egypt pushing eastwards on hunting expeditions until they encountered the sea, and thus opening up the route, than one could picture these Eastern peoples penetrating from an untenable base to a hostile country at the dawn of known days.

Upon the archaic statues of the god Min at Koptos there are many rude drawings scratched on the stone surface. These represent *pteroceras* shells, the saws of sawfish, a stag's head, the forepart of an elephant, a hyæna, a young bull, an ostrich, and a flying bird. It is evident that these drawings would not have been scratched upon the statue of the tribal god without some sort of meaning being attached to them, and it seems probable that one may see in them the articles of commerce which the people of Koptos imported from the Red Sea: shells, horn, ivory, feathers, and skins.

The earliest written record of a journey to Kossair dates from Dynasty XI., B.C. 2020, when an official named Henu travelled from Koptos to Kossair, and thence to Pount. "The king sent me," says Henu, "to dispatch a ship to Pount to bring for him the fresh myrrh from the chieftains

of the desert which had been offered to him by reason of the fear of him in those countries. Then I went forth from Koptos upon the road as his Majesty commanded me. Troops cleared the way before me, overthrowing those hostile to the king; and the hunters and the children of the desert were posted as the protection of my limbs. . . . Then I reached the Red Sea, and I built this ship, and I dispatched it with everything, after I had made for it a great oblation of cattle, bulls, and ibexes." Henu, no doubt, carried the material for building the vessel across the desert, and settled down on the coast to build it, his supplies being sent to him from Koptos as often as necessary. He tells us in another part of the inscription that he dug several wells in the desert; and one can imagine his little company living quite happily beside one of these wells near the seashore while the vessel was hammered together on the beach below. After the lapse of four thousands of years one may still picture these scenes: the launching of the ship into the blue waters, when the savour of burnt-offerings streamed up to heaven, and the shouts of the workmen rang across the sandy beach; the tedious journey along the barren coast, always the yellow hills upon one's right and always the boundless sea upon one's left; the landing on

the strange shores of Pount, where the precious myrrh-trees abundantly grew and there was talk of gold as of a thing of little worth; where sleek, bearded men and amazingly fat women sat at the doors of bee-hive huts raised from the ground upon piles; and where, walking abroad, one might meet with giraffes and other surprising creatures whose existence would not be credited by one's friends at home. An Englishman feels that it would almost have been worth the four thousand years of subsequent oblivion to have seen what these adventurers saw!

During the next twenty centuries the road seems to have been in almost continual use, but there are no interesting inscriptions recording expeditions made along it, though one may be sure that many of the trading expeditions passed over this route to the land of Pount. The town of Kossair seems to have been called Thaau at this period, but in Græco-Roman days this name has developed into Tuau or Duau, a word written in hieroglyphs simply with three stars. The trade with Arabia and India which flourished during the rule of the Ptolemies brought the road into very general use, and Kossair became as important a trading town as any in Egypt. The

10, 11, 12. Old Kingdom inscriptions at Wâdi Hammâmât.

13. Nisheet inscription of Thothmes III. at Wâdi Hammâmât.

14. Inscription of Ramses IV. Wâdi Hammâmât. Page 46.

15, 16, 17, 18. Inscriptions on Temple at Wâdi Hammâmât. Page 50.

19. Archaic drawing near Bir el Hegîn. Page 50.

20. Upper blue glazed bowl found in tomb of Qui-Ka. Page 86.

21–24. Fragments of Temple at Kossair. Page 5[illegible].

ROCK INSCRIPTIONS AT WADY FOWAKHÎEH AND KOSSAIR.

1, 2. Inscriptions near the archaic inscription on Plate vii.

3. Old Kingdom inscription, Wady Fowakhîeh.

4. Inscription giving name of King Unas, Wady Fowakhîeh.—Page 39.

5, 6, 7. Drawings of the Greek period in Wady Fowakhîeh.—Page 51.

8. Archaic drawing, Wady Fowakhîeh.

9. Greek inscriptions on blocks of quarried stone, Wady Fowakhîeh.—Page 50.

10, 11, 12. Old Kingdom inscriptions at Wady Fowakhîeh.

13. Misspelt inscription of Thothmes III. at Wady Fowakhîeh.

14. Inscription of Rameses IV., Wady Fowakhîeh.—Page 46.

15, 16, 17, 18. Inscriptions on Temple at Wady Fowakhîeh.—Page 49.

19. Archaic drawing near Bir el Ingliz.—Page 70.

20. Typical blue-glazed bowl found on ruins of Old Kossair.—Page 86.

21-24. Fragments of Temple at Kossair.—Page 81.

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Pl. x.

harbour, however, was so poor that a new port and town was constructed some five miles to the north, where a natural bay was easily able to be improved into a very fair harbour. This new town was named Philoteras, in honour of the sister of Ptolemy Philadelphos (B.C. 285), while the older port was now known as Aennum by foreigners, though to the Egyptians both towns were called Duau. I was fortunate enough to find some blocks of a Ptolemaic temple at the older Kossair, and on one of them was the name Duau, followed by the hieroglyph representing a town written twice to indicate the existence of the two ports. Not infrequently one finds at Koptos and elsewhere short inscriptions of this period relating to journeys made along this route to Kossair, and thence over the high seas. One example may here be quoted: "To the most high goddess Isis, for a fair voyage for the ship *Serapis*, Hermæus dedicates this."

I must be permitted to give in full a very interesting tariff of taxes imposed on persons using the road during the Roman occupation, which was found in a ruined guard-house just behind Koptos, at the beginning of the highway. It reads as follows:—

By Order of the Governor of Egypt.—The dues which the lessees of the transport service in Koptos, subject to the Arabian command, are authorised to levy by the customary scale, are inscribed on this tablet at the instance of L. Antistius Asiaticus, Prefect of the Red Sea slope.

For a Red Sea helmsman	drachmas	8
„ „ bowsman	„	10
„ an able seaman	„	5
„ a shipyard hand	„	5
„ a skilled artisan	„	8
„ a woman for prostitution . . .	„	108
„ „ immigrant	„	20
„ a wife of a soldier	„	20
„ a camel ticket	obols	1
„ sealing of said ticket	„	2
„ each ticket for the husband, if mounted, when a caravan is leaving . .	drachmas	1
„ all his women, at the rate of . .	„	4
„ a donkey	obols	2
„ a waggon with tilt	drachmas	4
„ a ship's mast	„	20
„ „ yard	„	4

The ninth year of the Emperor Cæsar Domitian Augustus Germanicus on the 15th of the month of May.

In the above tariff it will be seen that the persons or articles on which taxes were levied were such as one might expect to have passed between the Nile and the sea; and only those items concerning women seem to call for explana-

tion. The very large tax imposed upon prostitutes must indicate that Indian or Arabian females coming into Egypt along this route, and liable to bring with them the evils of the East, could only be admitted when they were of the richest and, consequently, best and highest class. Such women were always taxed in the Roman Empire, and in this regard a rather humorous story is told in Philostratus' Life of Apollonius of Tyana. That holy man was accosted by a tax-collector when about to cross the Euphrates, and was asked his wares. He replied with the somewhat *banal* remark that he had with him *Sōphrosúnē kai Dikaiosúnē kai 'Andreia*—"Temperance, Righteousness, and Courage." The official at once assessed these as *Doúlas*, "Female slaves," and would have taxed them as prostitutes, had not the prophet hastily corrected him by saying that they were not *Doúlas* but *Despoínas*, "Ladies of the House"! The "wives of soldiers" mentioned in the tariff shows that Mommsen was right in stating that the rule of the emperors was laxer in Egypt than elsewhere, for before the time of Severus it was not possible for legionaries to contract legal marriages while on active service; but in Egypt the marriages were so far recognised that the wives could be taxed

as such, and the children could be enrolled as legionaries.

During mediæval times this Red Sea highroad was much used by traders, but its river terminus was now removed from Koptos to Kus, a town a few miles farther up-stream, which soon became second only to Cairo in size and wealth. A pottery figure of Buddha, some mediæval Chinese vases, and a few Arabian antiquities, found in Upper Egypt, are records of the use of this route at that time. In later days the terminus again shifted to Keneh, a few miles to the north of Koptos, and to that town there still come Arabian traders from across the Red Sea, and pilgrims sometimes use it as the base of the journey to Mecca.

From Wady Fowakhîeh our party set out along this highroad at about 7 A.M. on a bracing morning in November. From Bir Fowakhîeh the road branched off to the right along a fine valley, shut in by hills fantastic in shape and colour. Clustering on either side of the path for some distance there were groups of huts, and in the hillsides there were traces of gold mines long since abandoned. The road beneath one was hard, flat, and blue-grey in colour, as though some mighty torrent had brought down masses of gravel and

had laid it level over the bottom of the valley. Gradually it sloped upwards, and as the hills drew in on either side one felt that the highest point of the whole road was soon to be reached. We were already half-way between the Nile and the sea, and so far there had been a continuous slope upwards, so gradual as to be almost imperceptible. The valley now twisted and turned narrowly between the dark hills, and the gravel bed became humped and banked up where the early waters had raced down some narrow gauge and had churned themselves through a natural basin into the wide bed beyond. The cold wind beat in our faces as we trotted up the narrowing valley, and the sun had not yet gained much power when, after a ride of two hours, we reached the rugged pass which forms the apex of the route.

The scenery here is superb. The pathway, such as it is, threads its way through a cluster of great grey boulders tumbled into the few yards' width between the rocks of the hillside, so that on foot one may jump from stone to stone up the whole length of the pass, and on camelback one has to twist and turn, rise and descend, until the saddle-straps come near to bursting. Amidst the rocks there is a well, known as Bir es Sid, which may have been opened in ancient times, perhaps by the

redoubtable Henu. A few natives were encamped near by, and not far away their goats were to be seen in the charge of a small girl, whose dark dress fluttering in the wind caught one's eye amidst the pale grey of rocks and the cold blue of the shadows.

Riding on for another two hours we reached an open ridge from which an extraordinary prospect of rolling hills and innumerable humps was obtained. On the left of the pathway there was a hill at the top of which stood a ruined Roman watch-tower, one of a chain of such posts which crowned the higher peaks all along the route. Up this hill we scrambled on foot, and climbed the tower at the summit, burning a pipeful of tobacco to the gods of Contentment thereon. The array of hills around us, as closely packed and yet as individual as the heads of a vast crowd of people, were of a wonderful hue in the morning light. Those to the north were a dead grey, those to the east were pink and mauve, and those to the south every shade of rich brown, while the shadows throughout were of the deepest blue. The wind tore past us as we sat contemplating the fair world at our feet, and two black ravens sailed by on it to take stock of us. Far below the path wound its way through the humps; and in the distance the

Bir es Sid, the well at the highest point of the Red Sea highroad.—Page 65.

The Roman fortress of Abu Zerah, looking south-east.—Page 67.

peaks and spires of the darker rocks into which it penetrated bounded the scene, and hid the sea from view.

Mounting the camels once more we defiled down the steep path, and for a time were lost amidst the hills. We lunched an hour later in more open country; and riding on afterwards for somewhat over two hours we reached the Roman station of Abu Zerah, which lies in the plain at the foot of a range of fine purple hills. As is usual in these buildings, the station consists of a rectangular enclosure, the wall being still some twelve feet in height in parts. The door-posts of the main entrance are made of sandstone, and upon one of them is the almost obliterated Latin inscription: SER . . . INV. . . . There are several rooms inside the enclosure, built against the wall, a space being left open in the middle. Just to the north there are a few graves, around which some broken pottery of Roman date lies scattered.

A ride of less than an hour brought us to another Roman station known as Hosh el Homra, "the Red Enclosure," where we only halted for a moment or so in order to ascertain that there was no unique feature in this building. In the afternoon light the scene was of great beauty. Range

upon range of hills surrounded us, which assumed a thousand varying colours: pink, rose, purple, blue, and olive-green in the foreground. Spires of rock shot up to a soft sky in which floated the already visible moon, and overhead seven black ravens soared past upon the wind. Soon the sun went down, and, resting in the lee of a group of dark rocks, we watched the pageant of colours go by and waited for the baggage camels to come up.

The journey was resumed at an early hour next morning, and after a trot of about three-quarters of an hour we reached the well and Roman station of Hagi Suliman. The ancient well, lying within the enclosing wall, has been restored in modern times, and upon a tablet let into the wall is rudely written: "Briggs, Hancock, and Wood, 1832." At this point the road is joined by another from the north-west, along which we made our return journey to Bir Fowakhîeh by way of Wady el Esh and Wady Adolla. From Bir Hagi Suliman to Bir Fowakhîeh by this route is a trot of about six hours. The morning was bitterly cold, and the wind swinging up the valley chilled one to the bone. The tracks led now this way and now that, around sharp corners where the wind buffeted one suddenly, across patches of sunlight where there

was some hope of warmth, and then again up shaded valleys where one might see an occasional wagtail or sand-martin puffing its feathers out against the cold airs. A trot of two and a half hours brought us to yet another Roman ruin, called El Litêmah. Here there is as usual an enclosing wall surrounding an area in which several chambers are built and a well is dug. The door-posts of the entrance are made of sandstone, and some Cufic inscriptions are written upon one of these by travellers in the middle ages. As we entered the building a number of sand-grouse rose from the midst of the ruins and went off to the north, their swift flight being visible for some time against a background of pale limestone hills, which told of our approach to the sea. Near here we passed a party of Arabian traders, some riding camels and others walking. A more evil-looking set of men I have seldom seen, and as they eyed us and whispered together one felt that some mischief was afoot. It was therefore not surprising to learn when we returned to the Nile that a caravan had been attacked with considerable bloodshed at about that place and time, by Arabians answering to this description.

An hour and quarter later we emerged from the hills into an open plain in which the well known

as Bir el Ingliz is situated. This well was dug by English troops at the beginning of the nineteenth century, during operations against Napoleon's generals, of which further mention will be made. A few Ababdeh natives were here encamped, and hastened to draw water for our thirsty camels, begging a cigarette as a reward for the labour. In the shade of some rocks to the south-east we partook of our luncheon. The seat which I selected for myself proved to be that chosen by a prehistoric hunter some sixty centuries ago, for upon the face of the rock beside it there is a rude archaic drawing of a man holding a bow. Two French soldiers of 1799 have here written their names—Forcard and Materon—which remain as memorials of a page of history little remembered at the present time.

In the afternoon we trotted over open desert and through shady valleys for about the space of an hour, at the end of which we reached the spring known as Bir Ambagi, situated in a fine wady, with grey-green cliffs on either hand and pink limestone hills ahead. In this fair setting there grew the greenest reeds and rushes amidst pools of the bluest water. A few Ababdeh goats grazed across the valley, bleating merrily as they went; and not a few birds added their notes to the

happy fluting of the wind, which, blowing from over-seas, seemed to set the rushes nodding to "songs of Araby and tales of old Cashmere." Leaving this valley we travelled down a rather dull wash-out sloping towards the sea, which at length opened sufficiently to show us a glimpse of the blue water. There is always something which penetrates to the heart in one's first view of the sea after an interval of months; and now, the eyes having accustomed themselves to the barren desert, the old wonder came upon one with new weapons, and attacked the senses with new vigour. One might have shouted for the sheer pleasure of it; and when, presently, a group of green palms passed into view lit by the afternoon sun, and stood between the sand and the sea, one felt to the full the power of the assault.

As the hills fell back on either side we passed on to the wide, flat beach and headed our camels towards the blue sea, dismounting at last a hundred yards from the rippling water. Except for the slow pulse of the waves there was an unbroken silence over the world. Southwards the sand stretched to the foot of the hills, beyond which rose the dreamy peaks of the Tourquoise Mountains; northwards the little town of Kossair lay basking in the sunlight; to the west the dark

hills through which we had passed stood waiting breathlessly to surround the setting sun; and to the east the wonderful sea seemed quietly to be sleeping and sighing in its sleep. Had one stumbled against the slumbering forms of the lotos-eaters themselves one would hardly have felt surprise; for here one might suppose that one was in a land "where it was always afternoon," a land "where all things always seemed the same." In the little bay, or high and dry upon the sand, lay vessels of a bygone age—two-masted hulks with high ponderous sterns. Beside them one could just discern two men fast asleep; and had one awakened them there seemed hardly a doubt that they would have been found to be as mild-eyed and melancholy as the men of Tennyson's poem.

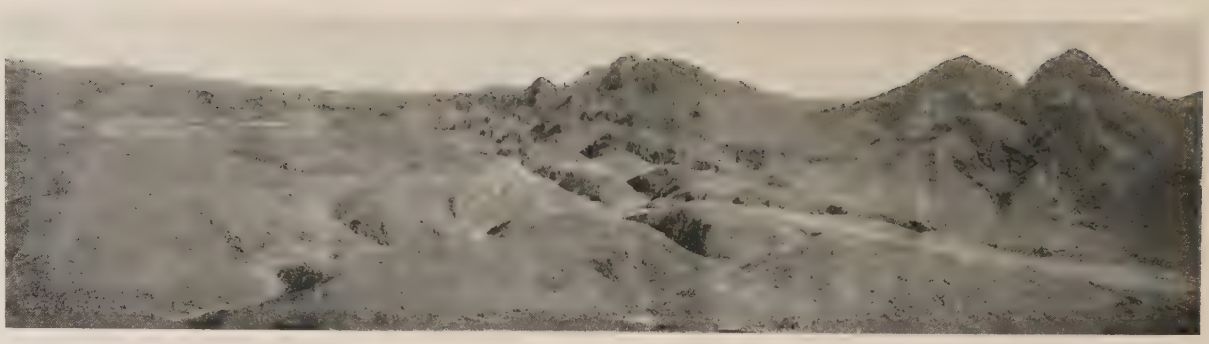
Presently, as we sat listening to the sea, the sun set, and from the minaret of a mosque in the town a boy called to the sleepy Faithful their daily summons to prayer. His voice drifting to us on the quiet air was the first human sound which had risen from the little town; but hardly had it died away before the distant sound of voices, and the grunts of camels, warned us of the arrival of our baggage. A few figures sauntered idly out of the town to watch us, as the tents were pitched

on the beach; and thus the dream was broken, and we awoke, as it were, to the knowledge that once more a human habitation had been reached and officials had to be interviewed.

A note to the Maltese *Mudir* or governor of the town brought that gentleman speedily to our tents, obviously pleased almost to tears to have the opportunity of relieving for an hour the utter boredom of his existence. The Mudir is an enforced lotos-eater. Corpulent of figure, and suffering the discomforts of a wall-eye; having practically no duties to perform other than those of the brief official routine; and having no European to talk to except his wife, his little daughter, and an Austrian mechanic, there is nothing left for him to do but to dream of the time when a benevolent government shall transfer him to a less isolated post. The four of us will not soon forget the ample figure of our guest, clad in white duck, as he sat upon the edge of our one real chair in the candle-light, and told us in disused English how little there is to tell regarding a man's life in this sleepy town. There was never a more desolate smile than that which wreathed his face as he spoke of the *ennui* of life, nor a braver twinkle than that which glinted in his single eye as the humour of his misfortunes touched him; and

though we should meet again in many a merrier situation—for officials are not left over long at Kossair—none of us will cease to picture this uncomplaining servant of the government as, with unsmoked cigarette and untasted whisky-and-soda, he told us that evening the meaning of four years of exile.

Kossair, when he first entered upon his duties, was a town of 1500 inhabitants; but these persons were so miserably poor, and found so little to do, that at their own request the government transported about a thousand of them to Suez and the neighbourhood, where the lotos does not grow and a man has to keep awake. Now there are but 500 souls in the town, 300 of whom are women and children. These people wed very young, and there is much family intermarriage; but, though they are a poor lot to look at, there is little mental degeneracy which can be traced to this cause. The Mudir, who is also in charge of the coastguards, is responsible for law and order in Kossair; there is a Syrian doctor in charge of the government dispensary; the above-mentioned Austrian mechanic looks after the engine for distilling the salt water; a coastguard officer and three men patrol the coast; four or five sailors are attached to the port; and a native schoolmaster teaches the



Desert panorama from a hill-top two hours' ride east of Bir es Sid, looking east. The road is seen passing to north and south of this hill and joining up further to the east.—Page 66.

children to read and write: this constitutes the official element in the town. The inhabitants are all either of Arab or Ababdeh stock, Egyptians being entirely wanting. They live mainly on fish and a little imported bread; but before the population was reduced some of the poorer families were actually eating chopped straw and other food fit only for animals.

There is very little to be done here, and most of the inhabitants sleep for two-thirds of the day. A fast-diminishing trade necessitates the occasional building or mending of a boat. This trade is done with camels and goats, which are brought across from Arabia and are led over the desert to the Nile, where they are sold at Keneh or elsewhere, the money being partly expended on grain, which is then carried back to Arabia. Pilgrims on the way to and from Mecca use these vessels occasionally, but the mariners of Kossair cannot be bothered to extend the tariff.

Except for one small group of palms there is absolutely no vegetation whatsoever in the neighbourhood, and even an attempt to grow a few bushes or flowers near the governor's quarters, though carefully persisted in for some time, proved an utter failure. For his supplies the Mudir is entirely dependent on the arrival of the govern-

ment steamer every second month; and if, as had happened at the time of our visit, this steamer was late, the unfortunate gentleman becomes comparatively thin from sheer starvation. Except for occasional travellers or prospectors no white men ever visit Kossair; though if there is cholera at Mecca an English doctor is sometimes sent to prevent the disease from passing into Egypt along this route. Letters and telegrams are every week conveyed across the desert by an express rider to Keneh, and an answer to a telegram might be expected in about a week.

A large sea-water distillery, set up some twelve or fourteen years ago, provides the town with pure water; but so few are the inhabitants that it is only worked twice a month. This good supply of water is largely responsible for the lack of sickness in the town. During the last four years only twenty persons have died, and of these ten were very young children and ten very old people. During these years the serious illnesses have only consisted of two cases of diphtheria: there has been no cholera, enteric, dysentery, or plague. Many of the inhabitants live to be centenarians, and in the town we saw several tottering old Methuselahs, who looked as though the gods of the underworld had forgotten them utterly.

Of sports there are none for the Mudir to indulge in. There is no shooting; he cannot bathe even if he desired to, because of the sharks; there are no boats to sail in worthy the names; he cannot leave his post to make camel trips to interesting localities, even if that amused him, which it does not; and the one pastime, the catching of crayfish on the coral reefs, bores him to distraction. The climate is so monotonously perfect that it does not form a topic even of thought: in winter it is mild and sunny, in summer it is mild and sunnier. It is never very cold nor very hot, except for the few days in summer when a hot east wind is blowing. The Mudir says that he neither increases nor decreases the amount of his clothing the whole year round, but always he wears his underclothes, his tight white-duck tunic, his loose white-duck trousers, his elastic-sided boots, and his red *tarbush* or fez.

After breakfast next morning we walked along the beach to the stiff, mustard-coloured government buildings, which stand on a point of land projecting somewhat into the sea. A spick-and-span pier and quay, ornamented with three or four old French cannon and some neat piles of cannon-balls, gave us the impression that we had been transported suddenly to a second-rate English

watering-place; but passing into the building that impression was happily removed at once. Through the sunny courtyard we went, and up the stair, saluted at intervals by the coastguardsmen, who had donned their best uniforms for the occasion, and at last we were ushered into the presence of our Maltese friend, now seated in state at his office table at the far end of a large airy room. The windows overlooked the glorious blue sea, and the breath of an English summer drifted into the room, bringing with it the sigh of the waves. Nothing could have been more entrancing than the soft air and the sun-bathed scene, but to the Mudir it was anathema, and his back was resolutely turned to the windows.

After coffee and a brief conversation we were taken to see the water distillery, of which the town is immensely proud; and from thence we were conducted to the chief mosque of the place, a picturesque old building which has seen better days. We were readily admitted by the Reader, who, however, turned up the grass matting which covered the floor in order, so the Mudir said, that our feet might not be dirtied by it, but in reality in order that the footstep of a Christian should not defile it. A few men were praying languidly at one side of the building, and in the opposite corner

a man lay snoring upon his back. There was the silence of sleep upon the place, and, returning to the almost deserted lanes between the houses outside, there was hardly a sound to disturb the stillness of the morning. In the bazaar a few people were gathered around the two or three shops, at which business had nigh ceased. A limp-limbed jeweller was attempting to sell a rough silver ring to a yawning youth, and, if I am not mistaken, a young girl who watched the transaction with very mild interest from the opposite side of the road was to be the recipient of the jewel. Soon we passed the open door of the schoolroom, where a dozen children chanted their A B C in a melancholy minor; and presently we came to the chief sight of Kossair—the old fortress built by the French at the end of the eighteenth century.

One enters the building through a masonry archway, closed by a heavy wooden door clamped with iron. There are still three or four cannon inside it to tell of its past life, but now the rooms and courts are whitewashed and are used as camel stables by the coastguards. I have no books here in Upper Egypt which will tell me the details of the Anglo-French struggle for the possession of Kossair, and I must therefore leave it to my readers to correct my ignorant statements. It

appears, then, that a French force occupied the fortress during the time of Napoleon's rule in Egypt, and that one fine day in the year 1800 there came sailing over the sea a squadron of English men-o'-war, which landed a storming party so formidable that the French were constrained to evacuate the place and to retreat across the desert to Keneh. With the English force there were a large body of Indian troops, and these were marched across to the Nile in pursuit of the French; but ere more serious operations had taken place the capitulation of Napoleon's army brought the campaign to a close. It is said that when the Indian soldiers saw representation of the sacred cow of Hathor upon the walls of the temples of Koptos and Kus, they fell upon their knees and did obeisance as in their own temples.

The inhabitants of Kossair live to such an age and in such stagnation that the stirring events of these old days are still talked of, and Englishmen are here still endowed with the prestige of conquerors. Involuntarily one held one's head higher as an old Shêkh pointed out the gate through which the French fled, and that through which the English bluejackets entered; and, walking through the quiet streets back to the tents, one gave a nautical hitch to the trousers, talked contemptu-

Kossair. Arabian boats on the beach.—Page 72.

A street in Kossair.

ously of "Boney," discussed the plans of Lord Nelson, named the yawning natives whom we passed "lazy lubbers," murmured "Shiver my timbers," called one another "me hearty," and, in a word, acted faithlessly to the *entente cordiale.*

In camp the remainder of the day was spent in that vague pottering which the presence of the sea always induces. There were some beautiful shells upon the shore to attract one, and natives brought others for sale, lying down to sleep in the shade of the kitchen tent until we deigned to give them attention. There were sketches to be made and photographs to be taken. Amidst the houses at the south end of the town some fragments of a Ptolemaic temple were stumbled upon, and the inscriptions thereon had to be copied. These were too fragmentary to be of much importance, and, except for the above-mentioned ancient name of Kossair there written, no point of particular interest requires to be noted here. We lunched and dined off the most excellent fish, a species named *belbul* being particularly palatable, while crayfish and a kind of cockles were immoderately indulged in. Having arranged to try our hand at the catching of crayfish during the night hours, we turned in early to sleep for a short time until the fishermen should call us.

The summons having come at about 11 P.M., we set out along the moonlit shore, two fishermen and a boy accompanying us, carrying nets and lanterns. Our destination was a spot at which the coral reefs, projecting into the sea, presented so flat a surface that the incoming tide would wash over the whole area at a depth of not more than a few inches. In the shallow water, we were told, the crayfish would crawl, attracted by our lanterns, and we could then pick them up with our fingers. These crayfish are not at first sight distinguishable from larger lobsters, though a second glance will show that the difference lies in the fact that they have no claws, and therefore can be caught with impunity. They are fearsome-looking creatures, nevertheless, often measuring twenty inches or so from head to tail. In eating them it is hard to believe that one is not eating the most tasty of lobsters.

A tedious walk of over three miles somewhat damped our ardour; and as the fishermen told us that the moon was too high and the tide too low for good hunting, we were not in the best spirits when at last we turned on to the coral reef. Here, however, the scene was so weirdly picturesque that the catching of the crayfish became a matter of secondary import. The surface of the reef, though

flat, was broken and jagged, and much seaweed grew upon it. In the uncertain light of the moon it was difficult to walk without stumbling; but the ghostly figures of the fishermen hovered in front of us, and silently led the way out towards the sea, which uttered continuously a kind of sobbing as it washed over the edges of the coral reef. This and the unholy wail of the curlews were the only sounds, for the fishermen had imposed silence upon us, and the moonlight furthered their wishes.

As we walked over the reef we had to pick our way between several small patches of water some five or six feet in breadth, which appeared to be shallow pools left by the last tide in the slight depressions of the rock. Presently one noticed that in these pools white clouds appeared to be reflected from the sky, but quickly looking up one saw that the heavens were cloudless. Staring closer at the water, it suddenly dawned upon one that these white clouds were in reality the sand at the bottom of the pools, and as suddenly came the discovery that that bottom lay at a depth of fifteen feet or more. Now one went on hands and knees to gaze down at those moonlit depths, and one realised that each pool was a great globular cavern, the surface area being but the small mouth of it.

One found oneself kneeling on a projecting ridge of coral which was deeply undermined all round; and, looking down into the bowl, one was reminded of nothing so much as of an aquarium tank seen through glass. In the moonlight the cloudy bottom of the caverns could be discerned, whereon grew great anemones and the fair flowers of the sea. Sometimes an arched gallery, suffused with pale light, led from one cavern to the next, the ceiling of these passages decorated with dim plants, the floor with coloured shells. Not easily could one have been carried so completely into the realms of Fairyland as one was by the gazing at these depths. Presently there sailed through the still water the dim forms of fishes, and now through the galleries there moved two shining lamps, as though carried by the little men of the sea to light them amidst the anemones. Two more small lamps passed into the cavern and floated through the water, now glowing amidst the tendrils of the sea plants, now rising towards the surface, and now sinking again to the shells, the sand, and the flowers at the bottom.

It was not at once that one could bring oneself to realise that these lights were the luminous eyes of a strange fish, the name of which I do not know; but now the fishermen, who had suddenly

drawn their net across the edge of the reef and had driven a dozen leaping creatures on to the exposed rock, beckoned us to look at this curious species at close quarters. Their bodies were transparent, and from around their mouths many filmy tentacles waved. The eyes were large and brown in colour, and appeared as fantastic stone orbs set in a glass body. Many other varieties of fish were caught as the tide came in; but it appeared that the moon was too powerful for successful sport in regard to the crayfish, and the catch consisted of but four of these. The sight of the fairy caverns, however, was entertainment sufficient for one night; and it was with discontent that one turned away from these fair kingdoms of the sea to return in the small hours of the morning to the tents. The moonlight, the sobbing of the ocean, the deep caverns lit by unearthly lamps, left an impression of unreality upon the mind which it was not easy to dispel; and one felt that a glance had been vouchsafed through the forbidden gates, and a glimpse had been obtained of scenes unthought of since the days of one's childhood. Had we also tasted of the lotos, and was this but one of the dreams of dreamy Kossair?

Upon the following day I rode northwards along the coast to visit the site of the Ptolemaic port,

which lies about five miles from the modern town. An hour's ride against a hard wind brought us to the little inlet, around which the mounds and potsherds of the town are scattered. The water in the bay was of the deepest blue; a rolling plain of yellow sand lay eastwards, backed by the darker ranges of mountains; and overhead the white clouds raced by. The sea washed up in a line of white breakers on to a rising bar of sand, sparkling with a thousand varieties of shells. Behind this bar there were pools of water passing inland, and here there may have been an artificial harbour. On the south side of the bay bold rocks jutted into the sea, and on the north there rose a series of mounds upon which the remains of the old town were strewn. Walking over these mounds, where the rhythmic roar of the waves falls continuously upon the ears, one's mind was filled with thoughts of the ancient port which has so utterly fallen, and of that ancient commerce with the East which must have been so full of adventure and romance to the men of old. Here from these mounds the townspeople have watched the great galleys set out over the seas for the mysterious land of Hind, and have seen the wealth of Pount and Arabia unloaded upon the quay; and here so many centuries later the labours of Egyptologists are beginning to per-

The interior of the mosque at Kossair. Page 78.

The main entrance of the fortress at Kossair.—Page 79.

mit one to recall something of what they saw, though the spade of the excavator has not yet touched this site.

There are two wells within reach of this spot, but both are two or three hours' journey away, and the water question must have been a serious one. The well to the north is named Bir Guah, and the other to the west is called Bir Mahowatât. This latter is the name of a tribe of Bedwin living at Suez, who state that they came originally from El Wij in Arabia. It is interesting to find that a well here should be named after them, for El Wij is nearly opposite this point, and one may realise thus what intercourse there is and always has been between Arabia and Egypt, even as far south as Kossair.

Returning with the wind at our backs we soon reached Kossair, and rode through the streets of the sleepy town to our tents. To tea in the afternoon came the Mudir, who for an hour or so entertained us with tales of *ennui*. Kossair fell asleep when the Roman Empire fell, awoke for a moment in the days of Napoleon, but slid into slumber once more over a century ago. There was a time when the east coast steamers used to call here, but now even they have left the town to its long siesta. As one listened to the story of decaying trade and

languid idleness the vision of Tennyson's lotos-eater was ever in the mind; and one's sympathy was as profound for an official stationed here as was one's envy of the man who might be permitted to rest himself for awhile from his labours upon this mild, sunny shore. The Mudir was, at the time of our visit, anxiously awaiting the tardy arrival of the steamer which was to take him and his family to Suez for three months' leave, and his eye fixed itself upon the sea at every pause in the conversation; and when he bid us farewell at the door of the tent, it was but to return to his own doorway, where he might watch for the distant smoke until the sun should set.

Early next morning we commenced the return journey to the Nile. As we rode away over the sloping sand towards the hills in the west we turned in our saddles to obtain a last view of the strange little dream-town which was sinking so surely to its death. The quiet sea rippled upon the sunlit shore in one long line of blue from the houses on the north to the Tourquoise Mountains on the south. Not a trace of smoke nor a sound rose from the town. On the beach a group of three men lay sleeping with their arms behind their heads, while two others crouched languidly

on their haunches watching our disappearing cavalcade. Then, in the silence of the morning, there came to us on the breeze the soft call to prayer from the minaret of the mosque. One could not hear the warbled words; but to the sleeping figures on the beach, one thought, they must surely be akin to those of the song of the lotos-eaters:—

> "How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
> With half-shut eyes ever to seem
> Falling asleep in a half-dream!
> To hear each other's whispered speech;
> Eating the lotos day by day,
> To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
> And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
> To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
> To the influence of mild-minded melancholy. . . ."

On the quay in the far distance we could just discern a portly white figure gazing steadfastly out to sea to catch the first glimpse of the steamer which had been awaited so patiently for so long.

IV.

THE IMPERIAL PORPHYRY QUARRIES.

Those who have travelled in Italy, and, in the museums and in the ruins there, have studied the sculpture and the architectural accessories of the Roman Imperial age, will be familiar with that magnificent purple stone known as Imperial Porphyry. It was one of the most highly prized of the ornamental stones employed by the great artists and architects of that age of luxury; and the great distance which it had to be brought, over parched deserts and perilous seas, must have sent its price up beyond the reach of all save the rulers of the earth.

The quarries from which this porphyry was obtained are situated in the region known as Gebel Dukhân, "the Hills of Smoke," in the Eastern Egyptian Desert, some twenty-seven miles from the Red Sea, opposite the southern end of the Peninsula of Sinai. Two or three

The start from Keneh. Native police loading the camels.—Page 91.

Midday rest at El Ghaiteh. Camels feeding from the bushes.—Page 96.

travellers during the last century have visited them, and recently the Survey Department of the Egyptian Government has published a technical report on the whole district; but with the exception of this and an article by the German explorer Schweinfurth, the literature on the subject, such as it is, seems to be more or less untraceable. In 1887 a gentleman of the name of Brindley obtained a concession there for the reworking of the quarries, but the project fell through owing to the difficulties of transporting the stone. In 1907 Mr John Wells, the Director of the now defunct Department of Mines, decided to make an expedition to Gebel Dukhân to report on the possibilities of reopening the old works; and it was with considerable pleasure that I received, and found myself able to accept, his invitation to accompany him, in order to see how far the Department of Antiquities could concur in the projects of modern engineers.

We set out from Keneh, a town on the Nile some 400 miles above Cairo, in the middle of March: a time of year when one cannot be sure of good weather in Egypt, for the winter and the summer together fight for the mastery, and the hot south winds vie with the cold north winds in ferocity. Sand-storms are frequent in the desert

in this month, and these, though seldom dangerous, can be extremely disagreeable. We were, however, most fortunate in this respect; and, in spite of the fact that the winds were strong, I do not recall any particular discomfort experienced from them, though memory brings back the not rare vision of men struggling with flapping tents and flying ropes. Our caravan consisted of some fifty camels, of which about thirty-five carried the baggage and water; a dozen were ridden by ourselves, Mr Wells' police, our native assistants, and others; and two or three belonged to the Shêkh and the guides.

The business of setting out is always trying to the patience. The camelmen attempt to load their beasts lightly in order that more may be employed; they dawdle over the packing that the day's journey may be short; the camels, unused to their burdens, perform such antics as may rid them the most quickly of the incubus; the untried ropes break as the last knot is tied, and the loads fall to the ground; the riding-camels are too fresh, and, groaning loudly, revolve in small circles, as though one's whistle of encouragement were a waltz. There are no people in the world so slovenly, so unpractical, or—if one may use a very slang word—so *footling*, as the

inhabitants of the Eastern Desert. One has heard so often of the splendid desert tribes, of fine figures and flashing eyes, of dignity and distinction, of gracious manners and lofty words, that one has come to expect the members of one's caravan to be as princely as they are picturesque. It is with a shock that one finds them to be but ragged weaklings, of low intelligence and little dignity. Is this, one asks, the proud Bedwi whose ears are now being boxed by one's servant? And are these the brave sons of the desert who are being kicked into shape by that smart negro policeman, the son of slaves? Look now, eight or ten of the Bedwin have quarrelled over their camels, and are feeling for their knives in preparation for a fight: shall we not see some stirring action, redolent of the brave days of old? No; the black policeman seizes his camel-whip and administers to as many as he can catch of the flying wretches as sound a beating as any naughty boys might receive. Lean-faced, hungry-eyed, and rather upright in carriage, one may expect them to be quick-witted and endowed with common-sense. Yet of all stupid people these unwashed miseries are the stupidest; and as one sees them at the starting of a caravan, muddling the ropes, upsetting the loads, yawning, scratching themselves, squabbling

in high, thin voices, and tripping over their antiquated swords and long guns, one's dream of the Bedwin in this part of the desert fades and no more returns.

Perhaps, however, it is the point of view which is at fault. Did one live in the desert without a deed to do or a thought to think beyond those connected with the little necessities of life, and with so vague a knowledge of time and distance as such an existence requires, one's notion of the practical might be different, and one's idea of intelligence might be less lofty. Perhaps, too, one has not yet met with the genuine types of the race; for the camel-drivers employed by an economical Shêkh, and the goatherds who wander through the valleys, may be but the riff-raff cast off from the more remote tribes. Moreover, there are a few exceptions to the general rule which may be met with even amongst the camelmen, but these are hardly sufficiently notable to record.

At last a start was made; and riding north-eastwards over the hot, sandy plain, we trotted slowly towards the distant limestone hills which rose above a shifting mirage of lake-like vapour. For some miles our road led over the hard, flat desert; but opportunely at the lunching hour we passed a spur of rock which afforded welcome

shade, and here we rested for an hour or so. At this point there is a well, known as Bir Arras, rather prettily situated amidst tamarisk-bushes and desert scrub; but as it is only ten miles distant from Keneh it is not much used by travellers. Riding on in the afternoon, we verged somewhat to the left, and passed along a valley much broken up by low mounds of sand collected round the decayed roots of bushes; and here several thriving tamarisks and other small trees lent colour to the scene. Soon we turned again to the left, and presently crossed two projecting spurs of the low hills, upon which beacons of stone had been erected in Roman days, on either side of the track, to mark the road. It is interesting to find that along the whole length of the route from Keneh to the quarries these piles of stone have been placed at irregular intervals in order that the traveller should have no difficulty in finding his way. Towards evening the tracks led us up the clearly marked bed of a dry river, bordered by tamarisks and other bushes; and, passing along this for a short distance, we called a halt, and pitched the tents amongst the sand hillocks to one side. The following morning we were on the road soon after sunrise; and, riding along the dry river-bed, we presently reached the Roman station

of El Ghaiteh, which lies, in all, some seven and a half hours' trot from Keneh. This is the first of the Roman posts on the road from Keneh to Gebel Dukhân, and here the ancient express caravans halted for the night. At the foot of a low hill there is a fortified rectangular enclosure, in which several rooms with vaulted roofs are built. The walls are constructed of broken stones, and still stand some twelve feet or more in height. The entrance is flanked by round towers, and passing through it one sees on the left a large tank, built of burnt bricks and cement, in which the water, brought from the well in the plain, was stored. Just to the north of the station there are the ruins of the animal lines, where rough stone walls have been built on a well-ordered plan, forming a courtyard in which the stalls run in parallel rows. Above the enclosure, on the hill-top, there are some carefully constructed buildings of sun-dried brick, which may have been the officers' quarters. Resting in the shade of the ruins, one's eye wandered over the sun-burnt desert to the hazy hills beyond, and thence back along the winding river-bed to the bushes at the foot of the hill, where the camels lazily cropped the dry twigs, and where green dragon-flies hovered against the intensely blue sky. Then

The Roman station at El Ghaiteh, looking down from the officers' quarters on the hill. A dry river-bed bordered by bushes runs across the plain.—Page 96.

A tank for storing water inside the station of El Ghaiteh.—Page 96.

again the ruins claimed one's attention, and presently one seemed to forget the things of the present time, and to drift back to the days when the blocks of Imperial Porphyry were heaved and hoisted, carried and dragged along this road to the Nile and to Rome.

A ride of somewhat over three hours across wide, undulating, gravel plains brought us to the next Roman station, known as Es Sargieh, which lies between two low mounds just to the north of the main track. Here a large excavation has been made in order to obtain water, and at its edge there are the remains of troughs and tanks constructed of brick and cement. The sand and clay from the excavation has been thrown up in an embankment, so as to form a rectangular enclosure. At one end there are the ruins of a few chambers, and the animal lines near by are clearly marked. Es Sargieh marks the point where the road divides, one track leading to Gebel Dukhân, and the other to the white granite quarries of Um Etgal; and it was thus an important watering-station.

From this point for the rest of the day our road lay across a hard flat plain, bounded in the distance ahead by the dim peaks of granite mountains. As we had stopped some considerable time at the two Roman ruins, the baggage camels and men had

pushed far in advance, and, with characteristic stupidity, continued to do so, though the sun went down and the stars came out. It was not till long past dinner-time that, riding furiously through the darkness, we managed to catch them up; and hungry, aching, and cross, we quickly devoured a cold meal and rolled into bed. During the night a gale of wind came near to overthrowing the tents, for we had bivouacked where we had overtaken the caravan, upon the exposed plain. The night air felt bitterly cold as, clad in pyjamas, one pulled at ropes and hammered at pegs; but it was a surprise to find the thermometer standing at 32° Fahrenheit at this time of year.

Having camped in the darkness, it was not till daybreak that we realised that we had now crossed the plain, and were already near the mouth of a valley which led into a region of dark rocks between two ranges of hills. Not long after sunrise we mounted our camels, and presently passed into this valley. Jagged cliffs towered above the road, and behind them the soft brown hills rose in an array of dimly seen peaks. A ride of two hours up this valley—that is to say, altogether about five hours' trot from Es Sargieh—brought us to the Roman station of El Atrash. There is a fortified enclosure containing several regularly arranged

buildings, a tank, and a deep, circular well constructed of brick. The gateway is flanked by brick towers up which the steps can still be traced. Outside the enclosure there are the usual animal lines; and near by there lies a large block of porphyry which must have been abandoned for some reason on its way to the river. The scenery here is wild and desolate. There was a feeling, as the eye passed from range to range of menacing hills and up to the grey clouded sky, that one was travelling in the moon. The day was cold and misty, and the sharp air already told of the altitude to which we had risen—now nearly 2000 feet.

From here the road led through valleys lying between hills of ever-increasing height. The colour of the rocks now changed from a deep brown to a kind of soft purple; while the ground over which we were moving, being composed of particles of red granite, turned to a curious rosy hue. It was as though one were looking through tinted glass; and these combinations of colour—the red valley, the purple hills, and the grey sky—gave to the scene a beauty indescribable.

We lunched in the shadow of the rocks, and sleeping on the ground thereafter one's dreams were in mauves and burnt-siennas.

Mounting again and riding along this wonderful valley, feeling more than ever like Mr H. G. Wells' men in the moon, early in the afternoon we reached the Roman station of Wady Gatâr, which lies in a hollow amidst lofty hills, some three and a half hours' ride from El Atrash. The station consists, as before, of an enclosure, chambers, disused well, and animal lines; but it is more ruined than the other posts which we had seen. There is a well not far from this point, to which the camels were sent to be watered; and we were thus able to spend a quiet afternoon in our camp amongst the hills.

Towards sunset I climbed to the top of a low mound of rocks which overlooked the fortress, and there the silence of the evening and the strangeness of the surrounding hues enhanced to a point almost of awe the sense of aloofness which this part of the desert imposes upon one. On the right the line of a valley drew the eyes over the dim, brown waves of gravel to the darkness of the rugged horizon. Behind, and sweeping upward, the sky was a golden red; and this presently turned to green, and the green to deep blue. On the left some reflected light tinged the eastern sky with a suggestion of purple, and against this the nearer mountains stood out darkly. In front the

low hills met together, and knit themselves into shapes so strange that one might have thought them the distortions of a dream. There was not a sound to be heard, except once when an unseen flight of migatory birds passed with a soft *whir* high overhead. The light was dim,—too dark to read the book which I carried. Nor was there much desire to read; for the mind was wandering, as the eyes were, in an indistinct region of unrealities, and was almost silent of thought.

Then in the warm, perfect stillness, with the whole wilderness laid prone in that listless haze which anticipates the dead sleep of night, there came—at first almost unnoticed—a small, black, moving mass, creeping over an indefinite hill-top. So silently it appeared, so slowly moved nearer, that one was inclined to think it a part of the dream, a vague sensation passing across the solemn, sleepy mind of the desert. Presently, very quietly, the mass resolved itself into a compact flock of goats. Now it was drawing nearer, and one could discern with some degree of detail the little procession—the procession of dream-ideas one might have said, for it was difficult to face facts in the twilight. Along the valley it moved, and, fluttering in the wind, there arose a plaintive bleating and the wail of the goatherd's pipe. He—one could see him

now—was walking in advance of his flock, and his two hands held a reed from which he was pouring the ancient melodies of his race. From the hill-top I could soon look down on the flock as it passed below. It had become brown in colour; and as the pipe ceased awhile the shuffle and patter of a hundred little creatures could be heard. It was a gentle sound, more inclined to augment than to diminish the dreamy character of the procession. Behind the flock two figures moved, their white garments fluttering in the wind, changing grotesquely the form and shape of the wearers. Over the gravel they went, and at a distance followed the dogs of the herd, growling as they passed. Over the gravel and down the valley, and with them went the gentle patter and the wandering refrain of the reed pipe. Then a bend in the path, or may be the fading of the dream, and the flock was seen no more. But in the darkness which had gathered one was almost too listless to feel that aught had passed beyond one's pale.

We left Wady Gatâr the next day soon after lunch and entered another fine valley. On the right the granite cliffs sloped up to the misty sky in clean, sheer faces of rock. On the left range after range of dimly peaked hills carried one's

thoughts into the clouds. The afternoon was sunless and the air bracing and keen. The camels, after their long drink, were ready for work, and we were soon swinging up the valley at a brisk trot. The road turned from side to side, now leading in a dozen clear tracks up the wide, gravelled bed of some forgotten torrent, and now passing in a single narrow path from one valley to the next. With every turn new groups of mountains became visible and higher peaks slid into sight. The misty air lent a softness to these groups, blending their varied colours into almost celestial harmonies of tone. Gradually the ranges mounted, until at last, as the afternoon began to draw in, the towering purple mountains of Gebel Dukhân rose from behind the dark rocks to the left of our road.

It was almost sunset before we reached the foot of this range, and the cloudy sun was passing behind the more distant hills as a halt was called. We were now in a wide, undulating valley, which was hemmed in by the superb mountains on three sides and disclosed low, open country towards the north-east. The beams of the hidden sun shot up from behind the dark hills in a sudden glare of brightness, and presently the clouded sky turned to a deep crimson. The lofty peaks of the southern

mountains now caught the disappearing sunshine and sprang out of the mist in a hundred points of vivid red. For only a few minutes the conflagration lasted, but before it had fully died out the vaporous outlines in the far distance towards the north-east took form and colour, and the last gleam of sunlight revealed, some twenty miles away, the thin line of the sea, and above it the stately mountains of Sinai. A moment later the vision had passed, the sun had set, and in the gathering darkness the baggage camels, lumbering round a bend, came into sight, calling our attention to more material things.

In the semi-darkness, while our meal was being prepared, we visited a Roman station which stands in the Wady Bileh at the foot of the Gebel Dukhân mountains, about three and a quarter hours' trot from the fortress of Wady Gatâr. The porphyry quarries and the settlement lay in the valley at the other side of the range of hills at the foot of which we were now standing; and to reach them one might either climb by an ancient path over a pass in the range, or one might ride round by the tortuous valley—a journey said to be of nearly thirty miles. This station was thus the first night's halting-place for express caravans returning from the quarries. At one side of the

The excavation inside the enclosure of El Sargieh.—Page 97.

The Roman station at El Greiyeh. The animal lines. The brick pillars supported the roof under which were the night stalls.—Page 139.

wide, ancient road stands the usual small enclosure, having a doorway flanked with towers, and containing a few ruined chambers and a well. At the other side a cluster of granite rocks rising into a small mound had been surrounded by a stout wall, either in order that it should serve as a fortress, or because these rocks were for some reason sacred. There was nothing particularly noteworthy about the station, but, lying amidst such wild and magnificent scenery, it assumed in the half-light a charm which will not soon be forgotten.

At dawn next morning we set out on foot to climb over the pass to the quarries. The sun was struggling to penetrate the soft mists as we started the actual ascent, and the air was cold and invigorating. Here and there one could detect the old Roman path passing up the hillside, but it was so much broken that a climb up the dry water-course, across which it zigzagged, was preferable. At the immediate foot of the pass there is a small Roman fort containing three or four rooms, and at the highest point, which is 3150 feet above sea-level, there is a ruined rest-house, where the tired climber, no doubt, was able to obtain at least a pot of water. Here at the summit we had a wonderful view of the surrounding country. Behind us the mountains rose in a series of misty ranges, and

before us lay the valley of Gebel Dukhân winding between the porphyry hills, while beyond them the northern mountains rose to some 6000 feet in the distance. The Roman road, descending on this side, was well preserved, and we were able to run down the 1200 feet or so, which brought us breathless to the level of the valley. The temple, town, and quarries lay about a mile down the Wady, at a point where there was a considerable breadth of flat gravel between the hills on either side.

The town ruins—a cluster of crowded houses enclosed by a fortified wall—stand on the slope of the hill. A fine terrace runs along the east side, and up to this a ramp ascends. Passing through the gateway one enters the main street, and the attention is first attracted by an imposing building on the right hand. Here there are several chambers leading into an eight-pillared hall, at the end of which a well-made and well-preserved plunge-bath eloquently tells of the small pleasures of expatriated Roman officers. A turning from the main street brings one into an open courtyard, where there are two ovens and some stone dishes to be seen, besides a large quantity of pottery fragments. Around this in every direction the little huts are huddled, narrow lanes dividing one set of chambers from the next. The town is, of

course, very ruined; but it does not require much imagination to people it again with that noisy crowd of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian quarrymen. One sees them prising out the blocks of purple porphyry from the hillside high above the valley, returning in the evening down the broad causeway to the town, or passing up the steps to the temple which stands on a knoll of granite rocks a couple of hundred yards to the north-east.

The steps lead one up to a platform which formed the forecourt of the temple. This court is now covered with the ruins of what was once a fine granite portico rising on the east side. Four columns supported an inscribed architrave and decorated cornice, above which was the pediment or pointed roof. Behind this portico stood the sanctuary, built of broken stones carefully mortared and plastered to the necessary smoothness. A granite doorway led from one side into the vestry. In the forecourt, amidst the ruins, stands the granite altar, in its original position; and near it lies the architrave with the proud inscription: "For the safety and the eternal victory of our Lord Cæsar Trajan Hadrian, absolute, august, and all his house; to the Sun, the great Serapis, and to the co-enshrined gods, this temple, and all that is in it, is dedicated." Then

follow the names of the Governor of Egypt, the Superintendent of the Mines, and other officials.

In the middle of the valley there is the well, which is now choked. A gallery, the roof of which was supported by five pillars, passes in a half-circle round one side of the well; and a shallow drain in the pavement seems to have carried a stream of water along it. Here the workmen could sit in the shade to ease the thirst which exercise on the hot hills so soon creates; and on our return journey up the pass we looked back more than once to this cool gallery and to the plunge-bath with a kind of envy of the past.

The quarries are cut here and there on the hillside without any regularity. The blocks of porphyry were prised out of the rock wherever the work could most easily be carried on, and the action of the years has so dulled the broken surfaces that they now look almost like those of the natural mountain. The blocks were carried down to the Nile, and in fact to Rome, in the rough, without even a preliminary dressing; for the work in this distant place had to be shortened as much as possible.

Looking, in the European museums, at the fine capitals, the polished basins, the statues, and the

Granite hills to the south of Wady Bileh. The Gebel Dukhân range is to the north of this wady.—Page 104.

Ruins of the Roman temple at Gebel Dukhân, showing the hillside from which the porphyry was taken.—Page 107.

many other objects cut out of Imperial Porphyry, one has admired the work of the mason or the genius of the artist. But here in the Hills of Smoke one thinks of these antiquities with a feeling bordering on veneration. If the workmanship tells of an art that is dead, how much louder does the material cry out the praises of an energy that is also dead? Each block of stone is the witness of a history of organisation and activity almost beyond thought. This purple porphyry was not known to the ancient Egyptians: a Roman prospector must have searched the desert to find it. One would have thought that the aloofness of the valley from which it is to be procured would have kept its existence the secret of the hills; for on the one side a winding pathway, thirty miles in length, separates the spot from the little-known main road, and on the other side a barrier of steep hills shuts it off from the Wady Bileh.

Although Gebel Dukhân is so near the Red Sea, it was not possible for the stone to be transported by ship to Suez. The barren coast here was harbourless, except for the port of Myos Hormos, which was too far away to be practicable; and the stone would have had to be unloaded at Suez, and dragged across the desert to the neigh-

bourhood of the modern Port Said. Every block of porphyry had therefore to be carried across the desert to Keneh, the old Kainepolis, on the Nile, and thence shipped by river-barge to the sea. Here it had to be transhipped to the great Mediterranean galleys, and thus conveyed across the treacherous sea to the port of Rome.

Probably the blocks were dragged by oxen or men upon rough waggons, for the roads are not bad, except at certain places. To ride from Keneh to Wady Bileh, at the quiet five-miles-an-hour trot of the camel, took us altogether twenty-two and a half hours; that is to say, the total distance is about 112 miles or so. The winding path from Wady Bileh up the valley to the quarries brings this total to about 140 miles; and the caravans could not have covered this in less than eight days. On the first night after leaving Keneh the camp was probably pitched in the open. On the second night the station of El Ghaiteh was reached, and here there were provisions, water, and a small garrison. The third night was spent at Es Sargieh, where water was to be obtained. On the fourth night the houses of El Atrash sheltered the travellers, water and provisions being here obtainable. On the fifth night Wady Gatâr was reached, where again there was a well.

The sixth night was passed at Wady Bileh, from whence express messengers could pass over the hill to the quarries. The seventh night was spent in the open, and on the following day the settlement was reached.

The long road was rendered dangerous by the incursions of the desert peoples, and many of the hills between the fortified stations are crowned with ruined watch-towers. Roman troops must have patrolled the road from end to end, and the upkeep of these garrisons must have been a considerable expense. The numerous stone-cutters and quarrymen had to be fed and provided for; and for this purpose an endless train of supplies had to be brought from the Nile valley. Oxen or donkeys for this purpose, and for the transporting of the porphyry, had to be kept constantly on the move. At Keneh a service of barges had to be organised, and at the seaport the galleys had to be in readiness to brave the seas with their heavy loads.

It is of all this—of the activity, the energy, the bravery, the power of organisation, the persistency, the determination—that an object executed in Imperial Porphyry tells the story.

The quarries were worked until about the fifth century A.D., for the Byzantine Emperors derived

from their Roman predecessors an affection for this fine purple stone. There is a Greek inscription on the path leading up to one of the workings, which reads, "Katholeke Ekklesia," and which is perhaps the latest example of old-world activity in the Eastern Desert. There is no other place in the world where this porphyry is to be found, and when the quarries at last ceased to be worked, some time previous to the seventh century, the use of that stone had to cease also, nor has it ever again been procurable.

One wonders whether there will come a time when some millionaire, fresh from the museums of Italy, will express a wish to pave his bathroom with the purple stone of the Emperors; and whether the Hills of Smoke will again ring with the sound of the hammer and chisel, in response to the demands of a new fashion.

It may be that some day the tourist will awake to the advantages and attractions of the Eastern Desert as a motoring country, will rush through the wadys, will visit the ancient centres of activity, will see these quarries, and will desire the porphyry. With a little preparation the road from Keneh to Gebel Dukhân could be made practicable for automobiles; and when once the land ceases to be but the territory of the explorer and the pros-

pector, one may expect its mineral products to be seen, to be talked of, and finally to be exploited.

In the late afternoon we left the valley, and climbed slowly up the Roman road to the summit of the pass, halting here to drink deeply from our water-bottles. The descent down the dry water-course was accomplished in a long series of jumps from boulder to boulder, at imminent peril of a sprained ankle. The grey rocks were smooth and slippery, and between them there grew a yellow-flowered weed which, when trodden upon, was as orange-peel. The rapid rush down the hillside, the setting sun, and the bracing wind, caused our return to camp to take its place amongst the most delightful memories of the whole expedition. Once we halted, and borrowing the carbines of the native police, we shot a match of half a dozen rounds apiece, with a spur of stone as target. The noise echoed amongst the rocks; and a thousand feet below we saw the ant-like figures of our retainers anxiously hurrying into the open to ascertain the cause of the disturbance.

As we neared the bottom of the hill the sun set, and once more this wonderful valley was lit with the crimson afterglow, and once more the mountains of Sinai stood out for a moment from the gathering mists above the vivid line of the

Red Sea. Darkness had fallen when at last, footsore and weary, we reached the camp; and one was almost too tired to enjoy the sponge-down in the half-basin of water which is all that can be allowed in this waterless region, and the meal of tinned food which followed. As one fell to sleep that night, one's dreams were all of strenuous labours: of straining oxen and sweating men; of weary marches and unsuspected ambushes; of the sand-banks of the Nile and the tempests of the sea. But ever in the far distance one seemed to be conscious of thoughtless, implacable men, dipping their bejewelled fingers into the basins of purple porphyry as they reclined in the halls of Imperial Rome.

On the following morning our party divided, Mr Wells and the greater part of the caravan going north-east to the petroleum wells of Gebel Zeit on the sea-coast, and I to Um Etgal, the Mons Claudianus of the ancients, where the white granite, also so much admired by the Romans, was quarried from the hillside.

The ruins of the town of Gebel Dukhân. The upright pillars of granite supported a roof.—Page 106.

The Roman town of Mons Claudianus, looking south from the causeway leading to the main quarry. The round piles of stone in the foreground are built at intervals along the causeway.—Page 124.

V.

THE QUARRIES OF MONS CLAUDIANUS.

In the previous chapter an account was given of a journey made to the Imperial porphyry quarries of Gebel Dukhân in the month of March 1907. These quarries are to be found about a score or so of miles from the Red Sea at a point in the Eastern Desert opposite the southern end of the Peninsula of Sinai. From Gebel Dukhân I returned to the Nile by way of the white granite quarries of Um Etgal, the ancient Mons Claudianus, and thence past the old gold workings of Fatireh to Keneh.

My caravan was composed of a riding party consisting of myself, my native assistant, my servant, and a guide; and the baggage-train of a dozen camels and men, and a couple of guards. The guide was a picturesque, ragged old man, whose face was wizen and wrinkled by the glare of the desert. His camel was decked with swinging tassels of black and yellow, and across his

saddle there was slung a gun at least seven feet long, while at his side there hung a broad-bladed sword in an old red-leather case. In his belt there were two knives, and in his hand he carried a stout bludgeon, something in the form of a hockey-stick. This latter is the weapon most generally carried by the Ababdeh and other desert peoples, and its antiquity is evidenced by the fact that the earliest hieroglyph for "a soldier" in the script of ancient Egypt represents a figure holding just such a stick.

The old guide was followed by three lean, yellow dogs, who seemed to be much bored by the journey and dejected by the sterility around. He was a man of some dignity, and took considerable pride in riding at the head of the little procession in order to show the way, although, except at the cross-roads, the tracks were perfectly plain and the ancient beacons were generally to be seen. Once or twice I made an attempt to pass him so that I might have an uninterrupted view of the scenery; for the sight of a ragged, huddled back and the hindquarters of a betasseled camel is inclined to pall after a while. But these efforts ended in a short, hard race, in which I was generally the loser; nor had I the heart to order the old man to the rear thereafter.

We set out from the camp at Wady Bileh, the nearest point to Gebel Dukhân on the main road, soon after daybreak, and passed along the wonderful valley leading back to the Roman station of Wady Gatâr, which I have already described, our route branching off towards the south just before reaching that place. The road then led along a fine valley, up which a blustering north wind went whistling, and it was only by donning an overcoat and by trotting at a smart pace that one could pretend to feel comfortably warm. Soon after noon I halted near some thorn-trees, in the shelter of which luncheon was presently spread. A vulture circling overhead watched our party anxiously, in the vain hope that somebody would drop dead, but on seeing us mount again to continue the journey it sailed away disgustedly over the windy hill-top.

It was still cold and stormy when, after trotting altogether for five hours from Wady Bileh, we arrived at the well of Um Disi, where the camp was pitched in order that the camels might drink and graze. The well is the merest puddle in the sand amidst the smooth boulders of a dry watercourse, hidden under the overhanging cliffs of granite. It lies in the corner of a wide amphitheatre of gravel and sand, completely shut in

by the mountains. Bushes of different kinds grow in great profusion over this amphitheatre, and from the tent door, when the eye was tired of wandering upon the many-coloured hills, one might stare in a lazy dream at a very garden of vegetation, around which the grey wagtails flitted and the dragon-flies slowly moved. It is an ideal place for a camp, and one but wished that more than a night could have been spent there; for one would have liked to have explored the surrounding hills and valleys, and to have stalked the gazelle which had left their foot-prints near the well.

The nights up here in this locality, which must be some 1500 or more feet above the sea, were bitterly cold, in spite of the approaching summer. There is perhaps no place where one more keenly feels a low temperature than in the desert; and here at Um Disi, where the air is that of the mountains, a colder night was passed than it has ever been my lot to endure—with the exception, perhaps, of one occasion some years ago when, with another student of archæology, I spent the night upon the flint-covered hill-tops of the Western Desert. Our baggage and bedding had then failed to reach us, and we were obliged to sleep in our clothes and overcoats, dividing a newspaper to

act as a cover for the neck and ears. By midnight we were so cold that we were forced to dance a kind of hornpipe in order to set the circulation going again in the veins; and my friend was light-hearted enough to accompany this war-dance with a breathless rendering of the hymn, "We are but little children meek," which had been dinned into his head, he told me, while staying at a mission school in another part of Egypt. Memory recalls the scene of the dark figure shuffling and swaying in the clear starlight, the biting wind whistling around the rocks in rhythmless accompaniment; and yet it does not seem that so much discomfort was then felt as was experienced in the flapping tent at Um Disi.

The journey was continued early next morning, the road leading out from the amphitheatre through a gauge on the eastern side. There was now some difficulty about the method of travelling, for only the guide knew the way; and as he rode with us, there was danger of our losing the slowly moving baggage camels, which always followed behind, catching us up at our halts for luncheon and other refreshment. I therefore took with me some bags of torn paper, and at every turning of the path, or at the cross-tracks, I threw down

a few handfuls in the manner of a paper-chase; and thus, though the path here wound from one valley to another in the most perplexing manner, the caravan reached its destination almost as soon as we.

It was disappointing to find that our camelmen, born and bred in the desert, were unwilling to take the responsibility of following safely in our tracks. One would have thought that the footprints of our camels would have been as easy for them to trace on an unfrequented path as torn paper is to us. The guide, on the other hand, showed a really wonderful knowledge of the intricate paths; for it is not reasonable to suppose that he had travelled between Gebel Dukhân and Um Etgal more than two or three times in his life, this being off the main routes through the desert. He did not once hesitate or look around, although when questioned he declared that many years had passed since last he had been here.

In these valleys we met, for the first time for some days, one or two Bedwin. A ragged figure, carrying a battle-axe and a mediæval sword, sprang up from the rocks, where he was tending a flock of goats, and hurried across to shake hands with our guide. The two entered into earnest conversation in low tones; and the old guide,

Mons Claudianus. The town.—Page 124.

Mons Claudianus. Chambers on the west side of the forecourt of the Temple. The threshold and base of a column of the granite portico are seen on the right.—Page 126.

after pointing with his lean finger to his bag of food, which was every day diminishing in size, and then to the hungry dogs, dismounted from his camel, tied up one of the dogs, and handed it over to his wild friend. A few hours later another ragged figure, this time a Bishari, carrying a long gun, ran forward to greet us, and to him the guide delivered over his second dog, after a similar discussion with regard to his food-bag. For over a mile from this point, after the dog and his new master had diminished to mere specks on the rocks, the wind brought down to us the melancholy howls of the former and the unconcerned song of the latter to his goats.

Our way led up the wide Wady Ghrosar, which ends in a pass, from the top of which a magnificent view is obtained. This point was reached in a trot of about three and three-quarter hours from Bir Um Disi. One looks down upon a great lake of sand, amidst which the groups of dark granite hills rise like a thousand islands, while dim ranges enclose the scene on all sides. From this huge basin a hundred valleys seem to radiate, and it would be an easy matter to head for the wrong peak and to lose oneself upon the undulating sands. Descending a smooth slope, we rested for luncheon in the shade of a group of rocks; and

presently mounting our camels again, we crossed the basin and entered a series of intricate valleys, which became more and more narrow and enclosed as the day wore on, giving us good reason to doubt whether our baggage camels would manage to follow. At last, in the late afternoon, after a ride of rather under four hours from the top of Wady Ghrosar, a turn in the path brought the town of Mons Claudianus suddenly into view; and in a moment the camels were forgotten, and the wonderfully preserved remains had carried one back to the days of the Emperors Trajan and Hadrian.

The hills of Um Etgal supplied Rome with a fine white granite speckled with black, which was deservedly popular for building purposes during the Imperial age. The stone was not employed by the ancient Egyptians, and it was left to a Roman prospector to discover its existence and to open quarries. The settlement which was founded here was known generally as Mons Claudianus, but in honour of the Emperor Trajan the well which supplied it with water was called Fons Trajanus, and this name was sometimes applied to the town. The stone was transported from here to the Nile on waggons drawn by oxen or men, and was placed upon barges at Keneh. It

was then floated down the stream to the sea, where it was transhipped to the galleys which bore it across the Mediterranean to the port of Rome. The distance from here to the Nile must be about ninety-five miles, since it took us nearly nineteen hours of five-miles-an-hour trotting to cover the distance; and, as will be seen, the blocks which were dispatched from the quarries were of enormous size. It must have been an easier matter to transport the Imperial Porphyry from Gebel Dukhân to the river; for the objects executed in that stone were not usually of a size to require particularly large blocks. But the great pillars which were cut from the white granite were often of dimensions which one would have regarded as prohibitive to transportation. In order to reduce the weight to the minimum the columns were dressed on the spot to within an inch or so of their final surface, whereas the porphyry blocks were light enough to be sent down in the rough. This is the explanation of the fact that at Gebel Dukhân there was but a small town, whereas here at Um Etgal the settlement was far more elaborate and extensive. Skilled masons had to live at Mons Claudianus as well as quarrymen, engineers as well as labourers; and the architects themselves may have had to visit the quarries on certain

occasions. If one has admired the enterprise which is displayed in the works at Gebel Dukhân, an even greater call on one's admiration will be made at Um Etgal; and those who would fully realise the power of the Roman Empire should make their slow way to these distant quarries, should realise the enormous difficulties of their working, and should think for a moment that all this activity was set in motion by the mere whim of an Emperor.

The town, enclosed by a buttressed and fortified wall, stands in a valley between the rocky hills from which the white granite was quarried. A broad road leads up to the main entrance. On the left side of this stand various ruined houses, and on the right there is a large enclosure in which the transport animals were stabled. Over half this enclosure there was a roof, supported by numerous pillars; but the other half stands open, and still contains line upon line of perfectly preserved stalls, at which some 300 oxen or donkeys could be stabled. Farther up the road, on the opposite side, just before reaching the entrance to the town, there stands the bath-house. One first enters a good-sized hall in which three small granite tanks stand. Here the bathers no doubt washed themselves before entering the

Mons Claudianus. East end of the Temple.—Page 126.

Mons Claudianus, looking over the town to the Temple on the hillside.—Page 126.

baths proper. From this silent hall two doorways open. The first of these leads into a series of three small rooms which were heated by furnaces in the manner of a Turkish bath. These chambers seem to have been heated to different degrees, for under the floor of the innermost there is a large cavity or cellar for the hot air, whereas in the other rooms there are only pottery flues, which pass down the walls behind the plaster. In one chamber there is an arched recess, which seems to have been made for ornamental purposes. The second doorway from the hall leads into a fine vaulted room, at the far end of which a plunge-bath, some nine feet long and four or five feet deep, is constructed of bricks and cement. Steps lead down into it from the floor level, and in the walls around there are ornamental niches in which statuettes or vases may have stood. In this tank the Roman officer was able to lie splashing after his hot-air bath, and there is an appearance of luxury about the place which suggests that he could here almost believe himself in his own country.

The enclosed town consists of a crowded mass of small houses, intersected by a main street from which several lanes branch to right and left. The walls are all built of broken stones, and the door-

ways are generally constructed of granite. Some of the roofing is still intact, and is formed of thin slabs of granite supported by rough pillars. One wanders from street to street, picking a way here and there over fallen walls; now entering the dark chambers of some almost perfectly preserved house, now pausing to look through a street doorway into the open court beyond. Large quantities of broken pottery and blue glazed ware lie about, but there did not seem to be many other antiquities on the surface.

The temple lies outside the town on the hillside to the north. A flight of ruined steps, some 25 feet in breadth between the balustrades, leads up to a terrace, on which stands the broken altar, inscribed as follows: "In the twelfth year of the Emperor Nerva Trajan Cæsar Augustus Germanicus Dacicus; by Sulpicius Simius, Prefect of Egypt, this altar was made." At the north end of the terrace there is a granite portico, of which the two elegant columns are now overthrown. Through this one passes into a large four-pillared hall, where there is another altar, upon which is written: "Annius Rufus; Legate of the XVth Legion 'Appolinaris,' superintending the marble works of Mons Claudianus by the favour of the Emperor Trajan." From this hall the sanctuary

and other important rooms lead. The walls in the various parts of the building now only appear as orderly piles of rough stones, but when they were neatly covered with the salmon-coloured plaster, which may be seen in the bath-house and elsewhere, they must have been most imposing. Built into one of the outer walls of the temple there is a block of stone decorated with the well-known Egyptian symbol of the disk and serpents; and this seems to be the only indication of Egyptian influence in the place.

To the north-east of the town a great causeway leads up to the main quarries, and half-way along it lies a huge block of granite, abandoned for some reason before it had been dragged down to the depository below. Here at the foot of the causeway lie several huge columns already trimmed, and many smaller blocks left in the rough. Most of these are numbered or otherwise marked, and on one enormous block, hewn into the form of a capital, there is written: "The property of Cæsar Nerva Trajan."

The well from which the inhabitants of Mons Claudianus drew their water lies in a valley nearly a mile from the town. It is enclosed within a courtyard, and near it stands a round tower some 25 feet in height. From this tower to a point

about a quarter of a mile from the town there runs an aqueduct along which the water was evidently sent, the drop of 25 feet giving it the necessary impetus. At the town end of the aqueduct there is a building which contains a large tank and a series of rooms something in the nature of a small barrack. Here, no doubt, lived the persons who had charge of the water-supply, and it was probably their duty to see that the tank was always full. Outside the building there is a trough from which the animals could drink. One imagines the quarrymen or their wives coming each day to the tank to fill their amphoræ with water, and the stablemen leading down the mules or donkeys to the trough. Here, as in the animal lines at the town, one is struck with the disciplined system shown in the arrangements, and it seems clear that the settlement was under the immediate eyes of true Romans, uninfluenced by the slovenliness of the Orient.

I first saw these ruins in the red light of sunset, and through the streets of the town I made my way in the silence of nightfall. No words can record the strangeness of wandering thus through doorways unbarred since the days of Imperial Rome, and through houses uninhabited for so many

Mons Claudianus. Doorway leading from the hall of the Bath-house into the room in which was the plunge-bath. Originally the walls were plastered.—Page 125.

Mons Claudianus. Pedestal of the altar in the forecourt of the Temple. The altar itself is seen broken in the foreground.—Page 126.

hundreds of years. It is difficult to describe the sensations which a scene of this kind arouses. At first the mind is filled with sheer amazement both at the freshness, the newness of the buildings, and at their similarity to those in use at the present day. One cannot bring oneself to believe that so many centuries have passed since human eyes looked daily upon them or hands touched them. But presently a door seems to open in the brain, a screen slides back, and clearly one sees Time in its true relation. A thousand years, two thousand years, have the value of the merest drop of water in an ocean. One's hands may reach out and touch the hands which built these houses, fashioned these doorways, and planned these streets. This town is not a relic of an age of miracles, when the old gods walked the earth or sent their thunderbolts from an unremote heaven; but stone by stone it was constructed by men in every way identical with ourselves, whose brains have only known the sights and sounds which we know, altered in but a few details.

The fact that those far-off days are so identical with those we live in does not, however, speak to the mind of the changelessness of things, of the constancy of human customs. That is a minor thought. It tells rather of our misconception of

the nature of Time; it shows how difficult it is to judge the ages by the standard of human experience. In looking at these almost unharmed relics of a life which ceased before our remotest English history had begun, one sees that their modern appearance is not so much due to the persistence of custom as it is to the shortness of time since the town was built. Two thousand years is not a period which we have the right to call long: it is but an hour in the duration of man's existence upon earth. "A thousand ages in thy sight are like an evening gone," runs the old hymn; and one feels that the ages since this town was built must indeed be but an evening to One whose laws of Decay and Change have not found time in them to show more than a few signs of their working. As one entered the temple in the twilight, and aroused unaccustomed echoes in the silence of its halls, the thought was that one had come rudely to awaken the Past; and, as the degenerate son of a race that had outlived its miracles, to bring the tidings that the gods were dead. But when the newness, the freshness of parts of the buildings, had opened the doors of the mind, the thought was only that the gods were still living and mighty who could think so lightly of twenty long centuries.

On the following morning I busied myself in taking notes and photographs amongst the ruins; and somewhat before noon the camp was struck. The road, now leading westwards towards Keneh, passed for the main part of the ride along a wide valley of great beauty; and after trotting for about three and a half hours we passed a small ancient quarry of fine, small-grained, grey granite, near which a few huts were grouped. Towards sunset we crossed the brow of a hill, and so descended into the Wady Fatîreh, where we camped near the well of that name. Here there is a Roman station differing very slightly from those already described. It lies about five and a half hours' trot from Mons Claudianus, and was thus the first night's halting-place for express caravans on the road from that town to Keneh.

As darkness fell I was sitting in the fortress questioning the guide as to the road, when we were both startled by the sound of falling stones, and looking up we saw a large dog-like creature disappearing over the wall. Examining the footprints afterwards, one saw them to be the heavy marks of a hyæna; but no more was heard of him. Hyænas are by no means rare in the desert, though it is not usual to find them so far back

from the Nile as this. In sleeping out in the desert travellers warn one to be careful, for a hyæna, they say, might snap at a foot protruding from the blankets, just as a man might take a biscuit from the sideboard; but I do not recollect hearing of anybody who has ever been attacked.

The ancient Egyptians used to eat hyænas, and the scenes in the early tombs show them being fattened up in the farms. Men are seen flinging the unfortunate creatures on their backs, their legs being tied, while others force goose-flesh down their throats. Probably the archaic hunter in the desert ate hyæna-flesh for want of other meat, and the custom took hold amongst the sporting families of dynastic times; for with proper feeding there is no reason to suppose that the meat would be objectionable. The old guide told me, as we sat in the darkness, that there are several trappers who make their living by snaring hyænas, and there is no part of the animal which has not a marketable value. The skin has its obvious uses; the skull is sold as a charm, and brings luck to any house under the threshold of which it is buried; the fat is roasted and eaten as a great delicacy; and the flesh is also used for eating, and for medical purposes, certain parts being stewed down and swallowed by women who desire to

Mons Claudianus. The first heated room of the Bath-house. The doorway on the left leads into the warmer room. The perpendicular cut in the left wall near the corner is one of the recesses in which the hot-air pipes were fixed.—Page 125.

Mons Claudianus. The same doorway- nearer view.

produce a family in spite of Nature's unwillingness.

In the neighbourhood of Fatîreh we noticed several rough workings in the rocks, near which there were often a few ruined huts. These are the remains of ancient gold mines, worked by the Egyptians and the Romans. There are said to be many old mines in this neighbourhood, and an attempt has been made in recent years to reopen some of them, though without much success. In an inscription of Dynasty XVIII. (B.C. 1580-1350) one reads of "the gold of the desert behind Koptos," which city was situated on the Nile a few miles south of Keneh; and, although most of the Koptos metal was obtained from the region of Wady Fowakhîeh, of which the reader will have heard in a previous chapter, some of the gold may have been mined in the Fatîreh neighbourhood at that date, as it certainly was in Roman times. The subject is one of such interest that I may be permitted to mention here something of the methods of working the gold employed by the ancient.

A full account is given by Diodorus, who obtained his information from Agatharcides, of the mines which are situated in the Eastern Desert farther to the south; and, as the methods were no

doubt similar in both districts, the information enables one to reconstruct the scenes which these hills of Fatîreh looked down upon two thousand years ago.

The persons who worked the mines were mainly criminals and prisoners of war; but with these there were many unjustly accused men of good breeding, and those who had by some political action earned the Pharaoh's or the Emperor's wrath. Frequently this class of prisoner was banished to the mines, together with all the members of his family, and these also were obliged to labour for the king's profit. No distinctions were made at the mines between the classes, but all suffered together, and all were weighed down with fetters by night and by day. There was little or no chance of escape, for sentries were posted on every hill-top, and the soldiers were ready to give chase through the waterless desert should a man elude the watchman. These soldiers were all of foreign extraction, and the chances were heavy against their understanding the speech of the prisoners; and thus they were seldom able to be bribed or introduced into a scheme of escape.

The work was carried on day after day without cessation, and always the labourers were under the

eye of a merciless overseer, who showered blows upon them at the slightest provocation. In order to keep down the expenses, no clothes were provided for the prisoners, and often they possessed not a rag to hide their nakedness. Nor were they allowed to give a moment's time to the bathing or care of their bodies. In good or in bad health they were forced to work; and neither the weakness of extreme age, nor the fever of sickness, nor the infirmities of women, were regarded as proper cause for the idleness even of an hour. All alike were obliged to labour, and were urged thereto by many blows. Thus the end of a man who had been banished to these mines was always the same: fettered and unwashed, covered with bruises and disfigured by pestilence, he dropped dead in his chains under the lash of the relentless whip. The sufferings of life were such that death was hailed with joy, and it was the dying alone who possessed a single thought of happiness.

Those who have seen the old workings on the exposed face of the rocks, and have known the coldness of the winter nights and the intense heat of the summer days, will alone realise what tortures these poor wretches must have suffered. One might well think that the wind which went moaning down the valley as we rode along the

path to the Nile still carried the groans of the sufferers, and that the whispering rocks still echoed the cries of utter despair. Looking at the huts where these people lived and the mines where they laboured, one could not regard the record of their woe, which Diodorus makes known to us, as a tale of long ago. Two thousand years, one may repeat, is not really a period which we should regard as long; and while walls stand upright and mines gape open, the sound of lamentation will not be hushed in these valleys.

The rock from which the gold was obtained, says Diodorus, was very hard; but the miners softened it by lighting fires under it, after which it could almost be broken with the hands. When it was thus prepared, thousands of prisoners were set to breaking it with iron tools, while the overseer directed their labours towards the veins of gold. To the strongest of the men iron picks were given, and with these, though wielded unskilfully and with great labour, they were made to attack the hillside. The galleries, following the veins, twisted and turned, so that at the depth of a few feet there was no glimmer of daylight; and for this reason the miners each carried a small lamp bound to their forehead. As the blocks of quartz were broken by the picks

they were carried to the surface by the children of the captives, who formed constant procession up and down the dark galleries. These fragments were then gathered up by youths and placed in stone mortars, in which they were pounded with iron pestles until the ore was broken into pieces of the size of peas. The ore was then handed over to women and old men, who placed it in hand-mills, and thus ground it to powder. This powder was then placed upon a sloping surface, and a stream of water was poured over it which carried away the particles of stone but left the gold in position. This process of washing was repeated several times, until all foreign matter was eliminated and the gold dust became pure and bright. Other workmen then took the dust, and, after measuring it carefully, they poured it into an earthenware crucible; and having added a small quantity of lead, tin, salt, and bran, they closed the vessel with a tight-fitting lid, and placed it in a furnace for the space of five days. At the end of this time the crucible was set aside to cool, and on removing the lid it was found to contain pure gold ready to be dispatched to the Treasury.

To bear witness to the accuracy of this account one sometimes finds mortars and hand-mills lying amidst the ruins of the old mining settlements.

At the mines of Um Garriat there are said to be thousands of these mills, and here at Fatîreh not a few are to be found. Sluices for washing the crushed ore have been observed in some of the old workings; and of the smelting crucibles remnants exist at Um Garriat and elsewhere.

Practically nothing is known of the methods employed by the Egyptians in earlier days, but they cannot have differed very greatly from those of the Roman period. There seems reason to suppose that less cruelty existed in dynastic times than in the days of the callous Romans; and in the following chapter an account will be given of a temple, a well, and a town built by King Sety I. for the benefit of the persons who were engaged in gold-mining.

The night spent at Fatîreh was again bitterly cold, and a violent wind necessitated a tussle with tent-ropes and pegs: a form of exercise as annoying in the daytime as any that exists, and in the shivering night-time unspeakable. A couple of hours' riding next day brought us to the end of the mountainous country and into the open desert. For the first time for several days the sun streamed down from a cloudless sky, but the strong north wind continued to blow in full force; and as we trotted over the level plains we were half-blinded

Mons Claudianus. A large granite column lying to the north-east of the town. The back wall of the town is seen behind the column, above which the Temple buildings are seen at the foot of the granite hills.—Page 127.

Mons Claudianus. Large granite columns lying at the foot of a quarry west of the town.—Page 127.

by the stinging sand. The peaked hills behind us rose from a sea of tearing sand, and before us in the distance rose low, undulating clay mounds, beyond which one could catch a glimpse of the limestone cliffs so typical of the Nile valley. In the afternoon we crossed these mounds and descended into a very maze of hillocks, amidst which we camped. Amongst these mounds we met a couple of Bedwin, the purpose of whose presence was entirely obscure. Our guide exchanged the usual greetings with them, and then in a low voice began to talk of the miserable dog which trotted dejectedly behind his camel. Again he pointed to his almost empty bag of food, and at last dismounted, fastened a rope to the creature's neck, and handed it to the Bedwin. The usual howls floated to us on the wind as we rode onwards, but the high spirits of the guide at his freedom from any further responsibility was a real pleasure to witness.

Early in the following morning I visited the Roman station of Greiyeh, which lies some seven hours' trot from Fatîreh, and about six hours, or rather more, from Keneh, and was thus the first night's halting-place out from the Nile, or the second from Mons Claudianus. The station is, as usual, a rectangular enclosure, in which several

rooms are constructed. Particularly well preserved are the animal lines, which lie to the west of the station. They consist of a courtyard in which fourteen rows of stalls are built, while down either side there has been a shed with a roof supported by a row of pillars. Not far away is the ancient well, enclosed in a small compound.

This is the last of the Roman stations, and having passed it, the ancient world seemed to slip back out of one's reach. The camels were set at a hard trot over the now flat and burning sand, and by noon the distant palms of Keneh were in sight floating above the mirage. As the houses of the town grew more and more distinct in the dazzling sunlight, the practical concerns of one's work came hurrying to mind; and in times and trains, baggage and bustle, the quiet desert, with its ghosts of Rome, faded away as fades some wonderful dream when the sleeper wakes.

VI.

THE TEMPLE OF WADY ABÂD.

THE small shrine in the Eastern Desert, which I have here called the Temple of Wady Abâd, is known to Egyptologists as the Temple of Redesiyeh, although it is thirty-seven miles or more from the village on the Nile, five miles above Edfu, which bears that name. Redesiyeh seems to have been the point from which Lepsius, the German archæologist, and other early travellers set out to visit the desert shrine; and hence the name of this wholly unimportant village was given to the ruin, and nobody has bothered to find one more suitable. By the natives the building is called *El Kaneis*, "the Chapel"; and since it is situated in the well-known Wady Abâd, it would seem most natural to call it the "Chapel, or Temple, of Wady Abâd." Modern prospectors and mining engineers have been puzzled to know what Redesiyeh has to do with the place; and the fact that an old German antiquarian half a

century ago collected his camels at that village being wholly without significance to them, they have regarded the word Redesiyeh as a probable corruption of Rhodesia, and have spoken, to the amazement and confusion of the uninitiate, of the Temple of Rhodesia in the hills of the Upper Egyptian Desert.

The shrine was built by King Sety I. (B.C. 1300), the father of Rameses the Great, for the benefit of the miners passing to and from the various gold mines near the Red Sea; and the story one hears from the modern engineers, which vaguely relates that the temple was erected by King Ptolemy as a memorial to his son, who died at this spot on his return from the mines, does not require consideration. During the brilliant reign of Sety I. the gold mines were energetically worked, and the produce of those upon the road to which this shrine was built was intended especially for the upkeep and ornamentation of the king's great temple at Abydos, about 180 miles by river north of the Wady Abâd. There are so many old gold workings between the river and the Red Sea that one cannot say definitely where Sety's miners were bound for who stopped to offer a prayer to the gods at this wayside shrine, but one may say certainly that Edfu, the

The Roman station of Abu Gehâd. Some of the rooms as seen from the court, looking west.—Page 152.

Front view of the Temple of Wady Abâd.—Page 155.

old Apollinopolis Magna, and El Kab, the old Eileithyiaspolis, were the cities from which they set out. It will, perhaps, be best to state that Edfu stands on the Nile about half-way between Aswan and Luxor—*i.e.*, about 520 miles above Cairo—and that El Kab is situated some 10 miles down-stream from Edfu. The Wady Abâd enters the desert exactly opposite Edfu; the shrine stands about 35 miles east of that town; and the Red Sea coast is about 100 miles farther east as the crow flies.

Towards the end of March 1908, when the hot south winds were driving the tourists towards the sea, and the trains from Luxor to Cairo were full to overflowing, the writer and his wife set out in the opposite direction, travelling southwards in an empty train as far as the little wayside station of Mahamîd, the nearest stopping-place to the ruins of El Kab. The camels which were to carry us and our camp to Sety's temple in the desert were awaiting us upon the platform, surrounded by an admiring throng of native loafers. The caravan, according to orders which were ultimately carried out, was to consist of ten baggage and four riding camels, and an assortment of camel-men under the leadership of a Shêkh; but more than double that number of camels lay grunting

in the sunlight as the hot train panted into the station. This was due to the fact that a rival and more wealthy camel proprietor, who had not been invited to do business on this occasion, had sent a few camels to the rendezvous on the chance of their being required, and this move the chosen proprietor met by the doubling of the number of his camels. The disappointed owner was himself at the station, and eloquently dilated upon the danger of trusting oneself to a Shêkh of inferior standing. In the infallible 'Baedeker' one reads that for this journey it is necessary "to secure the protection of the Shêkh of the Ababdeh tribes"; and though the edition in which these ominous words appear is a few years out of date, one realised in what a dilemma a traveller who did not know the country might have found himself. The Shêkh, it appeared, had even telegraphed his warning to me at the last moment; but this having been really the last of a short series of cards which it seems that he had played, it did not require many words to soothe matters into the normal condition of hullabaloo which everywhere prevails in Egypt at the departure of a caravan.

The baggage at last being dispatched southwards, we set out towards the ruins of El Kab, which could be seen shimmering in the heat-haze

a few miles away. It was our purpose to ride to Edfu, thence into the desert, and thence back to Edfu and on to Aswan. The first night was to be spent under the ruined walls of the ancient city of Eileithyiaspolis, and it did not take long to trot to the camping-ground by the river-side. Here, in explanation of the route which we followed, I must be permitted to enter into some archæological details in connection with El Kab and Edfu.

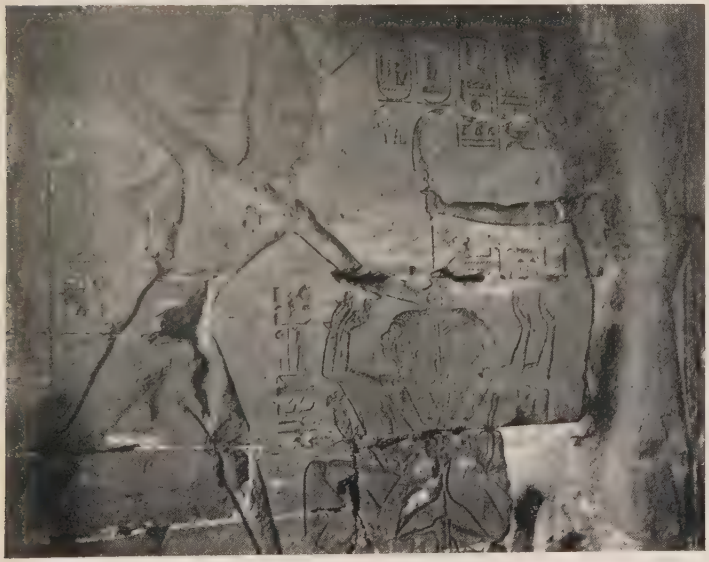
In archaic days, when the great Hawk-chieftains who glimmer, like pale stars, at the dawn of history were consolidating their power in Upper Egypt before conquering the whole Nile valley, there stood a city on the west bank of the river, opposite El Kab, which in later times was known as Hieraconpolis, "the city of the Hawks." This was the earliest capital of Upper Egypt, and here it is probable that the great king Mena, "the Fighter," the first Pharaoh of a united Egypt, was born and bred. This king and his father conquered the whole of Egypt, and for that conquest a certain amount of wealth was necessary, even in those days when might was as good as money. For this purpose, and for the reason that the arts of civilisation were already in practice, the gold mines of the Eastern Desert began to be worked.

This industry led to the establishment of a station on the east bank of the river opposite the capital, where the miners might foregather, and where the caravans and their escort of soldiers might be collected.

As larger deeds and wider actions became the order of the Pharaoh's day, so the mines were extended and the number of workmen increased; and it was not long before the station at El Kab grew into a city almost as large as the metropolis. In Dynasty XII. (B.C. 2000) a wall was built around it, which stands to this day, in order to protect it from incursions from the desert. Gradually great temples were erected here, and the city, now known as Nekheb and later as Eileithyiaspolis, was one of the busiest centres in the world.

The ruins of the old caravanserai are of wonderful interest. One may pass through the narrow doorway of the fortified enclosure, and in the silent area where once the soldiers and miners camped, and where now a few goats graze, one feels completely shut off from the world of the present day. The dark walls rise around one almost to their full height, and one may still ascend and descend the sloping ramps where the sentries paced in the olden days. Here there are the ruins of the temple

The Temple of Wady Abâd. The east end of the Portico. The square pillar was built in Græco-Roman times to support the broken architrave.—Page 155.



The Temple of Wady Abâd. The east wall of the Portico. The king is seen smiting a group of negroes.—Page 156.

where the vulture-goddess was worshipped; and yonder one sees the mounds of potsherds, bricks, corn-grinders, and all the *débris* of a forsaken town. In the side of a hill which overlooks the great ramparts one observes the long row of tombs in which the princes of the district were buried; and here in the biographical inscriptions on the walls one reads of many a feat of arms and many a brave adventure.

The hills of the desert recede in a kind of bay here, and if one walks eastwards from the town one presently sees that there is, at the back of the bay, an outlet through the range, five miles or so from the river and the enclosure. It was through this natural gateway, which the ancient Egyptians called "the Mouth of the Wilderness," that the caravans passed in early days into the great desert; and once through this doorway they were immediately shut off from the green Nile valley and all its busy life. There is a great isolated rock which stands in the bay; and in its shadow the miners and soldiers were wont to offer their last prayers to the gods of Egypt, often inscribing their names upon the smooth surface of the stone. Here one reads of priests, scribes, caravan-conductors, soldiers, superintendents of the gold mines, and all manner of officials, who were

making the desert journey, or who had come to see its starting-point.

In Dynasty XVIII. Amonhotep III. (B.C. 1400) erected a graceful little temple here, to which one may walk or ride out from El Kab over the level, gravel-covered surface of the desert, and may stand amazed at the freshness of the colouring of the paintings on its wall. Another little shrine was built, close by, a century and a half later; and in Ptolemaic times a third temple was constructed. Thus one is surrounded by shrines as one sets out over the hills away from this land of shrines: it is as though the gods were loath to leave one, and in solemn company came out to speed the traveller on his way.

The road which the gold miners trod passed through the hills, and then turned off towards the south-east; and presently it met the road which started from Edfu, or rather from Contra Apollinopolis Magna, which, as has been said, is ten miles distant from El Kab. Edfu was also a city of great antiquity, and was famous as the place where at the dawn of Egyptian history the Hawk-tribes overthrew the worshippers of Set, the god who afterwards degenerated into Satan. The great temple which now stands there, and which

is the delight of thousands of visitors each winter, was built upon the ruins of earlier temples where the hawk of Edfu had been worshipped since the beginning of things. The record of a tax levied on Edfu in the reign of Thothmes III. (B.C. 1500) shows that it was mainly paid in solid gold, instead of in kind; and one thus sees that the precious metal was coming into the country at that time along the Wady Abâd route, as indeed it was along all the great routes. Edfu was the main starting-point for the mines in the days when Sety I. built his temple, if one may judge from the fact that the hawk-god of that city is one of the chief deities worshipped in the shrine, while the vulture-goddess of El Kab has only a secondary place there; and in Roman times the Edfu road was perhaps the only one in general use.

This was the route which was selected for our journey; and after spending the night at El Kab, we rode next morning along the east bank of the river to a point at the mouth of the Wady Abâd, opposite the picturesque town of Edfu, where the pylons shoot up to the blue sky and dominate the cluster of brown houses and green trees. A morning swim in the river, and a trot of somewhat over two hours, was sufficient exercise for the first day;

and the afternoon was spent in camp, while the camelmen collected the food for the journey and led their beasts down to the river to drink.

On the following morning, soon after daybreak, we mounted our camels and set out over the hard sand and gravel towards the sunrise. A fresh, cool wind blew from the north, and the larks were already singing their first songs, as we trotted up the wady. The brisk morning air, the willing camels, the setting out into the freedom of the desert: how shall one record the charm of it? Only those who have travelled in the desert can understand the joy of returning there: a joy which, strangely enough, has only one equal, and that the pleasure of returning to water, to flowers, and to trees after a spell of some days or weeks in the wilderness. Here there are no cares, for there are no posts nor newspapers; here there is no fretfulness, for one is taking almost continual exercise; here there is no irritation, for man, the arch-irritant, is absent; here there is no debility and fag, for one is drinking in renewed strength from the strong conditions around. But ever enthusiasm, that splendid jewel in the ring of life, shines and glitters before one's eyes; and all one's actions assume a broader and a happier com-

The main entrance of the Roman station of Wady Abâd, looking west from inside the enclosure.—Page 164.

The piles of stone erected opposite the Temple of Wady Abâd.—Page 164.

plexion. The desert is the breathing-space of the world, and therein one truly breathes and lives.

A trot of about two hours brought us to the well known as Bir Abâd. The well is but a small, stagnant pool of brackish water, around which a few trees grow. There are six acacias, three or four small palms, a curious dead-looking tree called *Heraz* by the natives, and a few desert shrubs. Some attempt has been made to cultivate a small area, but this has not met with success, and the native farmers have departed. The sand under the acacias offers a welcome resting-place, and here in the shade we sat for a while, listening to the quiet shuffle of the wind amongst the trees and to the singing of the sand-martins. While playing idly with the sand an objectionable insect was uncovered, which the natives call a "ground-gazelle." It is a fat, maggot-like creature, about an inch in length, possessing a pair of nippers similar to those of an earwig. It runs fast upon its six or eight legs, but, whenever possible, it buries itself by wriggling backwards into the sand. A more loathsome insect could not well be imagined; and, since the species is said to be by no means uncommon, one will not delve with the fingers so readily in the future as one lies in the

shadow of the trees. A ride of about half an hour's duration along the valley and past a Shêkh's tomb, known as Abu Gehâd, brought us to the ruined Roman fortified station named after this tomb. It is much like other stations of this date, and consists of an enclosure in which a few chambers are to be seen. One enters from the west, and in the open area forming the courtyard there is a cemented tank in which a supply of water was stored for the use of travellers. The south wall of the enclosure to this day looks formidable from the outside, still standing some twelve feet in height, and being solidly built of broken stones. On this side of the station there are traces of an outbuilding, which may have been the animal lines. In the main enclosure a block of sandstone was found bearing the cartouches of the Pharaoh Tutankhamen (B.C. 1350), one of the successors of the "heretic king" Akhnaton, and by its form it seems to have been part of a shrine which perhaps had stood at this spot. The road from El Kab here joins the Edfu route, and the Pharaoh may have marked the meeting of the ways by a little wayside temple at which the gold miners might offer a prayer to the gods of the wilderness.

In Roman days when this station was built it is probable that the gold mines no longer formed the

main objective of the caravans which passed along this road. Emeralds, almost unknown to the ancient Egyptians, were now deemed an ornamentation of worth and beauty; and the emerald mines of Gebel Zabâra, which are most easily approached along this route, were vigorously worked by the Romans. It was on his way to these mines that Cailliaud in 1816 discovered the temple of Sety I. There was also a road from Edfu to the Græco-Roman port of Berenice on the Red Sea, which was much used at this period; and stations similar to that of Abu Gehâd are to be met with at fairly regular intervals for the whole distance to the coast.

Trotting on for another two hours and a quarter, we camped under the rocks of the Gebel Timsah, a well-known landmark to travellers. A head of rock projects into the level valley, and upon it the people of the desert for untold generations have set up small heaps of stones, the original idea of which must have been connected with religious worship. The two tents were no sooner pitched than a gale of wind, suddenly rising, tore one of them down, and almost succeeded in overthrowing the other. A tempest of dust and sand beat in at the doorway, and covered all things with a brown layer, so that one knew not where to turn nor

how to escape. Fortunately, however, like all things violent, it did not last for long; and a calm, starlit night followed.

The distance from Gebel Timsah to the temple which was our destination may be covered in about an hour and a half of trotting. We set out soon after sunrise; and presently a low ridge was crossed, the path passing between two piles or beacons of stones, set up perhaps in Roman days to mark the road; and from this point a wide, flat valley could be seen, stretching between the low hills, and much overgrown with bushes and brambles. Over the plain we jogged in the cool morning air, directing the camels to a high bluff of rock in the east, in which, the guide told us, the temple of Sety was excavated. Soon a Roman fortress came into sight, and later we were able to discern the portico of the temple sheltering under the rocks. Slowly the features became more distinct, and at last we dismounted at the foot of the cliffs and scrambled up the slope to explore the picturesque shrine.

It is strange that of the many Egyptologists who have travelled in Egypt, only two, Lepsius and Golénischeff, have visited this spot. It may be that the statement of the old Baedeker, which says that the wandering Ababdeh tribes "assume

INSCRIPTIONS AND DRAWINGS IN AND NEAR THE TEMPLE OF WADY ABÂD.

1, 6, 7. North face of cliff, east of Temple.—Page 158.

2. Façade of Temple, east side.

3. Two examples of five similar inscriptions, on cliff east of Temple.

4. On face of cliff just west of Temple.

5. Face of cliff, west of Temple.—Page 163.

8. On face of cliff just east of Temple.—Page 162.

9-14. Façade of Temple, west side.

15, 16. South-east pillar of Portico.—*Drawings in red paint.*

17. East wall of Portico.—*Drawings in red paint.*

Pl. xxviii.

a hostile attitude" to travellers, has confined them to the banks of the Nile; or perhaps the reported antics of the much-maligned camel have induced them to leave unvisited this pearl of the past. For that matter, however, the place might be reached upon the back of the patient ass, there being water at Bir Abâd, and, for the last few years, at the temple itself. When one sees this building, one of the best preserved of all the Egyptian temples, one is amazed at the lack of enterprise which has caused it to be uncared for, unprotected, and unvisited for all these years. A few mining engineers and prospectors alone have seen the shrine; and, since they have disfigured its walls with their names, one could wish that they too had stayed at home.

The little temple consists of a rectangular hall excavated in the rock, the roof being supposed to be supported by four square pillars, though in reality these also are part of the living rock. At the far end there are three shrines in which the statues of the gods are carved. In front of this hall there is a built portico, the roof of which rests upon four columns with lotus-bud capitals. One enters from the north, up the slope of fallen stones and driven sand, and so passes into the shade of the portico. Through

a hole in the roof, where a slab of stone has fallen in, one may look up at the towering rocks which overhang the building. Then, through a beautifully ornamented doorway, one passes into the dimness of the rock-cut hall, where one may be conscious that the whole height of the hill rests above one's head. Both this hall and the portico are richly decorated with coloured reliefs, and in the inner portions of the temple one stands in wonder at the brightness of the colours in the scenes which are seen on all sides. It has been said that the brilliancy of the painting in the temple of Amonhotep III. at El Kab is surprising; but here it is still fresher, and has even more admirably held its own against the assaults of time. We see the Pharaoh smiting down his negro and Asiatic enemies in the presence of Amen Ra and Horus of Edfu; we watch him as he makes offerings to the gods; and to the ceiling the eye is attracted by the great vultures with spread wings which there hover above one, depicted in radiant colours rendered more radiant by contrast with the browns and the yellows of the scenery outside. In the niches at the end of the hall the gods sit in serenity; and, though these figures have been damaged almost beyond recognition by pious Musslemans, there

ARCHAIC DRAWINGS OF SACRED BOATS ON ROCKS NEAR TEMPLE OF WADY ABÂD.

1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9. North face of cliff, east of Temple.—Page 157.
3. Smaller of two large fallen rocks, east of Temple.—Page 157.
6, 7, 10. Larger of two fallen rocks, east of Temple.—Page 157.

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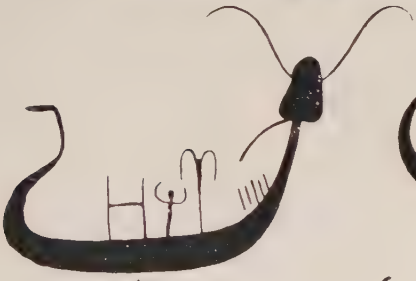

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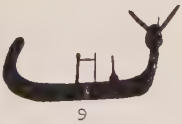

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Pl. xxix.

still clings around them their old majesty, and still one may find something solemn in their attitude, so that one almost pays heed to the warning inscribed on the doorway that a man must be twice purified before entering the little sanctuary where they sit.

It may be asked why Sety selected this spot for his temple, for, except that it lies on the route to the mines, the reason for its location is not at once apparent. The explanation, however, is not far to seek. This great bluff of rock has a smooth cliff-like surface on its north side, and for the earliest travellers, as for those of the present day, it has cast a welcome shadow in which one might take the midday siesta in comfort. Here, scratched or chiselled on the rock, there are very many drawings which undoubtedly date from archaic, and even prehistoric, times. Numerous representations of curious boats are seen, and their character justifies one in supposing them to be the sacred arks which formed in ancient times such an essential part of Egyptian religious ceremonial. In most of these vessels one sees the shrine which contained the god, and in one drawing a figure with flail raised, before which an animal is being sacrificed, is certainly the god Min himself, the patron of the desert. A few animals and figures

are also drawn, and when human beings are represented in or near the arks their arms are shown held aloft in the regular Egyptian attitude of worship.

Thus it seems that, from being a place to rest and to dream in, the rock had already in archaic times become a sacred spot, at which early man bowed himself down before the representations of the ark of Min. From this period until Dynasty XVIII. it seems, from the lack of inscriptions here, that the mines were not much used. Amonhotep III., however, sent his Viceroy of the South out here, whose name, Merimes, is written upon the rocks near the temple; and his temple at El Kab, at the beginning of the route, is a further indication of his interest in the gold workings. Just as this king had built his temple near the sacred rock at "the Mouth of the Wilderness," so Sety I., following half a century later, decided to erect his shrine at the foot of this more distant sacred rock, the half distance having been already adventured by the intermediate Pharaoh Tutankhamen. Since the place was just about a day's express ride from Edfu and El Kab, its situation was convenient; and, moreover, there was no other head of rock in the neighbourhood which offered so fine a position for a rock temple.

In the inscriptions near the mouth of the excavated portion of the shrine, Sety caused to be recorded the story of the building of the temple; and parts of this are of sufficient interest to be quoted here:—

In the year 9 (B.C. 1304), the third month of the third season, the twentieth day. Lo! his majesty inspected the hill-country as far as the region of the mountains, for his heart desired to see the mines from which the gold is brought. Now when his majesty had gone out from the Nile valley, he made a halt on the road, in order to take counsel with his heart; and he said, "How evil is the way without water! It is so for a traveller whose mouth is parched. How shall his throat be cooled, how shall he quench his thirst?—for the lowland is far away, and the highland is vast. The thirsty man cries out to himself against a fatal country. Make haste!—let me take counsel of their needs. I will make for them a supply for preserving them alive, so that they will thank God in my name in after years." Now, after his majesty had spoken these words in his own heart, he coursed through the desert seeking a place to make a water-station; and lo! the god led him in order to grant the request which he desired. Then were commanded quarrymen to dig a well upon the desert, that he might sustain the fainting, and cool for him the burning heat of summer. Then this place was built in the great name of Sety, and the water flowed into it in very great plenty. Said his majesty, "Behold, the god has granted my petition, and he has brought to me water upon the desert. Since the days of the gods the way has been dangerous, but it has been made pleasant in my glorious reign. Another good thought has come into my heart, at

command of the god, even the equipment of a town, in whose midst shall be a settlement with a temple. I will build a resting-place on this spot, in the great name of my fathers the gods. May they grant that what I have wrought shall abide, and that my memory shall prosper, circulating through the hill-country."

Then his majesty commanded that the leader of the King's workmen be commissioned, and with him the quarrymen, that there should be made, by excavation in the mountain, this temple. Now after the stronghold was completed and adorned, and its paintings executed, his majesty came to worship his fathers, all the gods; and he said, "Praise to you, O great gods! May ye favour me forever, may ye establish my name eternally. As I have been useful to you, as I have been watchful for the things which ye desire, may ye speak to those who are still to come, whether kings, princes, or people, that they may establish for me my work in this place, on behalf of my beautiful temple in Abydos."

The last words tell us for what purpose this route to the gold mines had been bettered. A second long inscription is devoted to blessings on those who keep up this shrine and the mines with which it was connected, and to curses on those who allow it to fall into neglect. A third inscription is supposed to give the speech of the travellers who have benefited by the king's thoughtfulness:—

Never was the like of it (the temple and the well) made by any king, save by the King Sety, the good shepherd,

who preserves his soldiers alive, the father and mother of all. Men say from mouth to mouth, "O Amen, give to him eternity, double to him everlastingness; for he has opened for us the road to march on, when it was closed before us. We proceed and are safe, we arrive and are preserved alive. The difficult way which is in our memory has become a good way. He has caused the mining of the gold to be easy. He hath dug for water in the desert far from men for the supply of every traveller who traverses the highlands."

Sety dedicated his temple to Amen Ra, whom he identified with Min, the old god of the place, and to Harmachis, the sun-god, whom he seems to have identified with the hawk, Horus of Edfu. He also here worshipped Ptah, the Egyptian Vulcan, and his lion-headed consort Sekhmet; Tum; Hathor, the Egyptian Venus; Nekheb, the vulture-goddess of El Kab; Osiris and Isis; Mut, the mother goddess; and Khonsu, the moon-god who was the son of Amen Ra and Mut, and with them formed the royal trinity at Thebes. All these gods one sees upon the walls of the temple, and before them Sety is shown offering incense, wine, flowers, and food. Some inscriptions on the rocks near the temple, written by high officials of this period who visited the mines, make mention of two other deities: Ra, the sun-god, and a strange goddess who rides a horse and brandishes a shield and spear.

When Sety died the temple was still not quite finished, and for some reason or other which we shall probably never know, it so remained. His temple at Abydos, too, was neglected, and the revenues ceased to be collected. Thus, in spite of the curses inscribed on the walls of the desert shrine, the king's plans for the continual working of the mines, in order to pay for the maintenance of his great masterpiece, were not carried out. At Abydos Rameses II., in an inscription written a few years later, states that he found the temple of Sety there unfinished, and that it had not been "completed according to the regulations for it of the gold-house." He, however, finished the building, and perhaps re-established the gold workings along the Wady Abâd route, for on one of the pillars of the hall of the desert shrine there is an inscription written by an official which reads: "Bringing the gold for the festival in the temple of Rameses II."

Since that time until the present day the gods in the sanctuary have looked out at a long stream of travellers, soldiers, miners, and officials. Upon the rocks and on the walls of the temple there are several hieroglyphical and Greek inscriptions which tell of the coming of all manner of people. A chief of the custodians of El Kab here records his name,

ARCHAIC DRAWINGS OF SACRED BOATS, ANIMALS, ETC., ON ROCKS NEAR TEMPLE OF WADY ABÂD.

1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14. North face of cliff, east of Temple.—Page 157.

2, 3, 6, 10, 15, 16, 17. Larger of two fallen rocks, east of Temple.—Page 157.

5. West face of cliff projection, east of Temple.—Page 157.

13. Smaller of two fallen rocks, east of Temple.—Page 157.

Pl. xxx.

and a scribe of the king's troops is immortalised near by. Many of the Greek inscriptions are ex-votos dedicated to Pan, with whom the old Min had been identified; and as the latter was the god of desert travel, so the sprightly Pan becomes the sober patron of the roads. Miners from Syracuse and from Crete tell of their advent; and one traveller describes himself as an Indian, a voyager, perhaps, in one of those trading vessels which brought to the port of Berenice the riches of the East, to be conveyed across this great desert to the markets of Alexandria. A man named Doriōn states that he had returned in safety from an elephant hunt, probably in the south. Two inscriptions are written by Jews, thanking God for their safe journeys; and it is interesting to notice that one of them is called Theodotus, son of Doriōn, and the other Ptolemy, son of Dionysius—all pagan names. A troop of Greek soldiers have recorded their names in the temple, and state that they kept a watch before "Pan of the Good Roads."

These travellers, besides, or instead of, writing their names, seem often to have piled a few stones at conspicuous points as a memorial of their passage. At various places in the neighbourhood, and especially at the foot of the hills opposite

the temple, there are many such piles of stones; and when well built they rise from the rocks like altars, three feet or so in height, and perhaps two feet in diameter. In one or two cases there are fragments of old Egyptian pottery lying beside them, and there seems no question that they are connected with religious worship. The same custom still prevails amongst the desert people, though now its significance is not remembered; and yet its meaning is not entirely forgotten, for on a hill-top near the temple we found, near such a pile of stones, three pairs of gazelle horns and a collection of Red Sea shells pierced for stringing, a modern offering to the old gods.

In Græco-Roman times a large fortified station was constructed near the temple, and this still stands in fairly good preservation. It is built in the plain in front of the temple, not more than a hundred yards from the foot of the cliffs. The enclosure is somewhat larger than is usual in these stations, but the greater part of the area has never been built upon. The enclosing wall still stands to a height of ten feet or so in parts, but here and there it is almost entirely ruined. It is built in three thicknesses, so that on the inside there are two heights at which one might walk around the rampart without showing above it. One enters

through a well-built masonry doorway, and on either side one may see the hole into which the beam was shot to close the wooden door at nights. On one's right there is a group of small chambers; and here an isolated house, in one wall of which a window is still intact, forms the best-preserved portion of the ruin. On one's left there is a large hall, in which there was a tank, parts of which, now half-choked with sand, can be seen. The next building on one's left is also a hall of considerable size—the common mess-room, probably, of the travellers. One then passes into the open court-yard, which bears off to the left, or north, and does not contain more than a trace or so of walls.

Although one sees so many of these Roman stations in the Eastern Desert, their charm and interest never palls; and, more than any other ancient buildings, they bring back the lost ages and recall the forgotten activities of the old world. These ruins, too, are always picturesque, and gather to themselves at dawn and at sunset the hues, the lights, and the shadows of the fairest fancy. At dawn, at noon, at sunset—all day long—this fortress in the Wady Abâd is beautiful; and for those who love the desert there is here and in its surroundings always some new thing to charm. The walls of the enclosure, and beyond them the

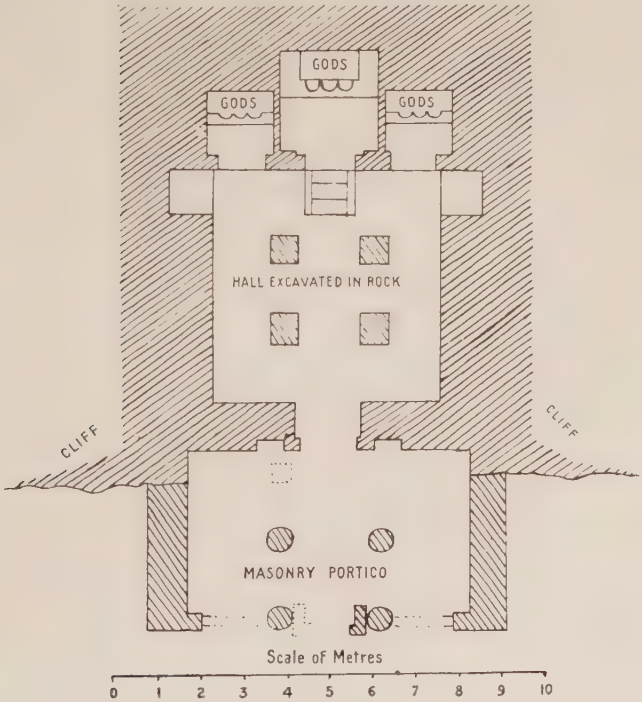
pillared portico of the temple sheltering under the rugged brown cliffs, form as delightful a picture as may be found in Egypt. As one sits in the blue shadow one may watch the black-and-white stone-chats fluttering from rock to rock, and overhead there circles a vulture, as vividly coloured as those which form the ceiling decoration in the temple. The wide flat plain, shut in by the distant hills on all sides, entices one from the fortress on to its sparkling surface, though the tumbled rocks near the temple soon call one back to their breezy humps and shady nooks. The hundred surrounding hill-tops vie with one another in the advertisement of their merits, and one attains a summit but to covet a further prospect. Or, attracted by the two or three trees and the few bushes which grow in the plain over against the fortress, one walks to their welcoming shade; and there one may listen to the song of the sand-martins and to the strange, long-drawn note of the finches.

"A book of verses underneath the bough . . . ."

One knows now what the old philosopher desired to express; for the wilderness is indeed Paradise, and here one may find the true happiness.

The day slips past in a half-dream of pleasure; and to the student of archæology, who finds so

Greek inscription relating to an elephant hunt, on a rock to the east of the Temple of Wady Abâd.—Page 163.



Sketch-plan of the Temple of Wady Abâd.

much for his pencil to record and his mind to consider, the hours race by at an absurd speed. The two days which we spent here passed like an afternoon's dream, and the memories which remain in the mind are almost too slight to record. Writing here in the study one reconstructs the rugged scene, and searches for the incidents which gave gentle colour to it. There was a flight of cranes, which sailed overhead, moving from south-east to north-west, on their way to spend the summer in Europe. Why should one's memory recall so charmedly the passage of a hundred birds? There was a hyæna which, in the red dusk, stood upon a hill-top to watch us, and presently disappeared. There were three vultures which rose from the bones of a dead camel, soared into the sky, and alighted again when we had passed. There came a flock of goats and sheep at noonday to the well, with much bleating and with the gentle patter of many hoofs. The shepherd in his picturesque rags eyed us curiously as his charges drank, and, still watching us, passed down the wady towards the west when they had quenched their thirst. And so one's memory wanders over the two days, recalling the trivialities, and passing over the more precise details of camp life and of work, until presently one sees the tent struck and the baggage

bumping down the valley once more on the backs of the grunting camels. The return journey to Edfu was soon accomplished, and the accumulated mail of five or six days which was in waiting at the end of the ride quickly brought one back to the business of life, and relegated the Wady Abâd to the store-chamber of happy recollections.

VII.

A NUBIAN HIGHWAY.

Opposite the town of Aswân, a short distance below the First Cataract of the Nile, there rises an island known to travellers by its Greek name of Elephantine. The river sweeps down from the cataract to east and west; southwards one may watch it flowing around a dozen dark clumps of granite rocks, which thrust themselves, as it were, breathless above the water; and northwards almost without hindrance it passes between the hills and palm-trees of the mainland. Nowadays should one stand upon the mounds which mark the site of the ancient city of Elephantine, and look east and north, one would feel that modern civilisation had hidden for ever the scenes of the past, and had prevented the imagination from re-picturing the place as it was in the elder days. The huge Cataract Hotel overshadows the ruined city, and stares down from its pinnacle of granite on to the tumbled stones of ancient temples. On the island

itself, opposite this hotel, the elaborate and ultra-modern rest-house of the Ministry of Public Works rises amidst its terraced gardens; and farther to the north stands the imposing Savoy Hotel, surrounded by luxuriant trees and flowers unknown to the ancient Egyptians. Eastwards the long, neat promenade of Aswân edges the river, backed by the Grand Hotel, the Government offices, and other large buildings; and at one end the noisy railway station tells the insistent tale of the Present. During the winter one may watch the busy launches and small craft plying to and fro, and may see the quality and fashion of Europe amusing itself at either end of the passage; while at night the brilliant lights blaze into the waters of the Nile from a thousand electric lamps, and the sounds of the latest valse drift out through open windows. The place is modern: one sips one's whisky-and-soda above the crushed-down remains of Pharaonic splendours, plays tennis in a garden laid out above the libraries of the Ptolemies, and reads 'The Times' where, maybe, melancholy Juvenal wrote his Fifteenth Satire.

But should one turn now to the west and south a different impression might be obtained. On the island still stands the imposing gateway of the rich temple destroyed for the sake of its building-

stone in the days of Muhammed Ali; and near it, only recently, an archæologist uncovered the intact burial vault of the sacred rams of the Nile-god Khnum. The rocky hills of the western mainland tower above the island, great drifts of golden sand carrying the eye from the summit to the water's edge; and here, cut into the rocks, are the tombs of the ancient princes of Elephantine. In this direction there is almost nothing that is more modern than the ruined monastery of St Simeon, built at the head of a sandy valley in the early days of Christianity, and destroyed by the fierce brother of Saladin in 1173 A.D. With one's back to the hotels, and one's face to these changeless hills, the history of the old city is able to be traced with something of the feeling of reality to aid the thoughts.

One period of that history stands out clearly and distinctly amidst the dim course of far-off events. From being a stronghold of a savage tribe the south end of the island had become covered by the houses and streets of a fine city, named *Abu* or "Elephant-City" (and hence Elephantine), no doubt after the elephant symbol of its chieftain. The feudal tendencies of the Vth and VIth Dynasties—about B.C. 2750 to 2475—had brought power and wealth to the local princes

in many parts of Egypt; and here the family of the chieftains of the island had begun to rise to a degree of some importance. This was largely due to the fact that to them was intrusted the office of "Keeper of the Door of the South," and the protecting of the Egyptian frontier at the First Cataract from invasion by the negro tribes beyond.

The city rose amidst its trees and rocks at the foot of the cataract, at a point where in those days the river still ran swift, and where the distant roar of waters continuously drummed upon the ears. On the eastern mainland opposite the island stood the huts and hovels of the great *'Swanu*, or market, which gave its name to the latter town of Aswân; and here the negroes, coming from the upper reaches of the river by the valley road which avoids the rocks of the cataract, met and traded with the inhabitants of Elephantine. At the far end of this road the barren islands of Philæ, Bigeh, and others were regarded as neutral ground, and the rocks of the mainland were not yet forbidden territory to the Egyptians for some miles upstream. But beyond this the country was little known, and those who penetrated into it took their lives in their hands.

First there came the land of the Kau tribes; and then, farther to the south, the Wawat on the east bank and the Sethu on the west dwelt in barbaric independence. Still farther to the south lived the warlike Mazoi, who might sometimes be seen at the market, ostrich feathers in their hair and bows and clubs in their hands. The land of Arthet lay to the south again; and lastly, not much below the Second Cataract and the modern Wady Hâlfa, there lived the almost unknown people of Aam.

Who dwelt to the south of this the Egyptians did not know. That territory was "The Land of the Ghosts": the perilous borders of the world, and the misty ocean into which no man had penetrated, were there to be encountered. To the inhabitants of the brilliant little metropolis the peoples of the upper river appeared to be a hazy folk; and the farther south their land the more mysterious were their surroundings and the ghostlier their ways. The negroes who came to the market no doubt told stories then, as they did in later times, of the great stature and the marvellous longevity of those distant races; and though but a couple of hundred miles of winding river separated the Egyptian frontier from that

of the land of Aam, that distance sufficed to twist the thoughts of the market-gossiper from the mortal to the immortal.

In archaic times an unknown Egyptian king had penetrated some sixty miles up the river, and had left a record on one of the rocks;[1] and King Sneferu of the IIIrd Dynasty had devastated a part of the country. But from that time until the beginning of the Vth Dynasty the land and its people, left unmolested, had drifted once more into the pale regions of mystery. As the nobles of Elephantine grew in wealth and power, however, their attention began to be turned with some degree of fixidity towards the south; and when the energetic King Sahura came to the throne, it was felt that the time had arrived for the probing of the mystery.

The roads which led to the south along the eastern bank of the river, and which were used by the negroes near the frontier when coming to the market, were not practicable for caravans bound for distant goals; and the Egyptians

[1] The various rock-inscriptions of Lower Nubia mentioned in this chapter were found during a tour which I made in that country in the autumn of 1906, and are recorded in my 'Report on the Antiquities of Lower Nubia and their Condition in 1906-7,' published for the Egyptian Government by the University Press, Oxford. The evidence for the locating of the various tribes is also given there.

The Inscribed Rock, from the north-west.—Pages 181-183.

The Inscribed Rock, from the south-west.

turned their eyes, therefore, to the western hills, behind which the sorrowful lands of the Dead were somewhere situated. Almost exactly opposite the city lay a sand-covered valley, in which now stands the ruined monastery mentioned above. From the island a boat carried one across to the little reedy bay, from whence a trudge of half a mile or so over the soft sand brought one on to the upper levels of the desert. Looking towards the north, the road which led eventually to Lower Egypt was to be seen; to the west the eye wandered over the undulating wilderness to the far horizon, made awful by the presence of the Dead; and to the south the sand-drifts and the rocky hillocks hid the untravelled paths to Aam and the Land of the Ghosts. Keeping the river on the left hand, it seemed to the Egyptians that they might here pass over the upper desert as far as the gods permitted men to penetrate; and a descent to the Nile at any convenient point would bring them, like a bolt from heaven, upon the tribes there settled.

The army of Sahura—perhaps a thousand men with numerous baggage-donkeys—set out along this road, and after a march of a few days as nearly straight ahead as possible, struck the river (which bends towards the west) at a point in the

land of Arthet, now known as Tomâs. A tribute was no doubt collected from the rich fields which there border the Nile; an inscription recording the name of one of the captains was cut upon a convenient face of rock; and the army returned to Egypt to publish its heroism in the streets of Elephantine. Another expedition in the reign of King Asesa followed after a few years, the event being again recorded on the rocks. Farther than Arthet, however, these armed forces did not venture to go; nor was this Nubian highroad used with great frequency during the following years.

About the year 2500 B.C. a prince of Elephantine named Herkhuf made up his mind to penetrate farther towards the mysterious lands of the south. It is forty-four centuries since he set out over the desert, with the wind whistling past his ears and the powerful sun warming his bones and his heart within him; yet the story of his adventures may still be read, the path by which he travelled may still be discerned, and the names of his captains may still be seen on the rocks of the land of Arthet. Herkhuf, having obtained the necessary order from the Pharaoh, set out with his father Ara, "in order," as he says, "to explore a road to the country of Aam." The road which he explored

and opened up was probably a continuation of the route from Elephantine to Arthet, passing not far back from the river, and descending to the water between Abu Simbel and Wady Hâlfa in the heart of the land of Aam. The expedition was entirely successful, and Herkhuf states that he was "very greatly praised for it." Emboldened by the fame which his enterprise had brought him, he made a second expedition to Aam, and was gone from Egypt eight months. A third excursion was more adventurous. Herkhuf set out upon the "Oasis-road," which runs from a point north of Aswân to Kurkur Oasis, and thence branches to Tomâs or Arthet and to the Oasis of Khârgeh which lies westward, and which in those days was inhabited by Libyan tribes. At the Kurkur junction Herkhuf met with an army, under the leadership of the Prince of Aam, which was on its way to chastise these Libyans; but how the wily Egyptian contrived to use it instead as an escort to his own men back to Aam, and how he returned to Egypt through the hostile territory of Sethu, Arthet, and Wawat, with three hundred asses laden with the presents of his host, are tales too long to narrate here.

One story only may be recorded in this chapter. During a fourth expedition to Aam, Herkhuf had

managed to obtain one of the dwarfs or pigmies who inhabited a region of the Land of the Ghosts. He at once informed the king, now the boy Pepy II.; and in reply he received the following letter, which is, perhaps, the earliest example in the world's history of a private communication :—

"I have noted," writes the King, "the matter of your letter which you have sent to me, in order that I might know that you have returned in safety from Aam, with the army which was with you. . . . You say in your letter that you have brought a dancing pigmy of the god from the Land of the Ghosts, like the pigmy which the Treasurer Baurded brought from the Land of Pount in the time of Asesa. You say to my majesty, 'Never before has one like him been brought by any one who has visited Aam.' . . . Come northward, therefore, to the court immediately, and bring this pigmy with you, which you must bring living, prosperous, and healthy, from the Land of the Ghosts, to dance for the King and to rejoice and gladden the heart of the King. When he goes down with you into the vessel, appoint trustworthy people to be beside him at either side of the vessel: take care that he does not fall into the water. When he sleeps at night, appoint trustworthy people who shall sleep beside him in his cabin; and make an inspection ten times each night. My majesty desires to see this pigmy more than the gifts of Sinai and of Pount. If you arrive at court, the pigmy being with you, alive, prosperous, and healthy, my majesty will do for you a greater thing than that which was done for the Treasurer Baurded in the time of Asesa, according to the heart's desire of my majesty to

see this pigmy. Orders have been sent to the chief of the New Towns to arrange that food shall be taken from every store-city and every temple (on the road) without stinting."

How easy it is to picture the excited boy awaiting the arrival of this wonder from the south, or to watch in the imagination the long caravan as it winds its way over the western hills from Aam to Elephantine, where Herkhuf and his prize will take ship to Memphis.

Later in the reign of Pepy II. the tribes of Arthet and Wawat revolted, and the Nubian highroad echoed with the songs of Egyptian soldiers. The commander of the expedition, named Pepynakht, slew a large number of the unfortunate negroes, took many prisoners, and collected a great quantity of plunder. It was perhaps during this disturbance that a certain prince of Elephantine, named Mekhu, was murdered in Arthet. News of his death was brought to his son Sabna by a ship's captain who had himself escaped. Sabna immediately collected a few soldiers and a hundred baggage-donkeys, bearing presents of honey, oil, ointment, and fine linen, and set out upon the same highroad towards Arthet. By the judicious use of his oil and honey he was able to discover the body of his father; and, loading it upon a

donkey, he commenced the return journey. Before he was clear of Arthet, however, he found it necessary to avert an attack by presenting a sullen negro chieftain with an elephant's tusk three cubits in length, at the same time hinting that his best tusk was six cubits in length. But how the expedition arrived safely at Elephantine, and how Sabna buried his father there in the western hills behind the modern Savoy Hotel, and how he was rewarded by the king for his really plucky undertaking, cannot be here related at length.

There was now no more mystery about the country on this side of the Second Cataract, and by the perseverance of these princes of Elephantine the way was made ready for the conquest of the Sudân, which the Egyptians commenced in the XIIth Dynasty and completed in the XVIIIth. We of the present day cannot, perhaps, appreciate how much pluck and obstinacy these nobles required in the undertaking of these expeditions. Not only were they penetrating into lands which were inhabited by the most savage tribes, but they believed these tribes to be endowed with superhuman powers. From childhood they had heard stories of their magical power; while in pushing their way into the distant land of Aam they

assuredly expected to encounter those ghosts who hovered at the edge of the world. Their caravan routes over the western hills ran dangerously near the terrible territory of the Dead; and, to their superstitious minds, their daily marches and their nightly camps were beset by monsters and by bogies compared to which the fierce Mazoi were as nought.

The reader who finds interest in the picture of Herkhuf exploring the roads of Aam, and of Sabna searching for his father's body in hostile Arthet, will ask whether any definite traces of the high-road still remain. One would have thought that after four thousand four hundred years it would have utterly disappeared; but this is not the case. Let the visitor to Aswân step out some afternoon from the hall of his hotel, where the string band throbs in his ears and the latest Parisian gowns shimmer before his eyes, and let him take boat to the little western bay behind the ruins of Elephantine. Here in the late afternoon the long blue shadows fall, and he may walk in coolness over the sand towards the monastery which stands on the higher ground before him. At the top of the hills to his left he will presently see, some distance away, a large isolated boulder near the tomb of some old Mussleman saint; and making

his way up the hillside towards this boulder, he will suddenly come upon a paved causeway[1] which sweeps up over the sand to the rocky summit. Rough flat blocks of sandstone form the paving, and these are only here and there overwhelmed by the drifting sand, though it is evident that the road has been entirely buried at the point where it approaches the water.

Mounting to the hill-top, the causeway is seen to pass within a few yards of the great boulder, which one now finds to have been surrounded by a rough wall, as though to form a kind of sanctuary or chapel. On the sides of the rock there are several inscriptions recording the coming of various officials of the Empire—tax-collectors, superintendents of the Nubian gold mines, and so on. It is evident from this that the road was used for many a long year after Herkhuf and Sabna had done with it; though now it possessed for the travellers no terrors, nor did it lead any more to the Land of the Ghosts.

At the point where the causeway passes the boulder the hard surface of the upper desert literally bristles with countless little heaps of stones, each consisting of a small, upright slab

[1] I can hardly suppose that I am the first to observe this road, and yet I can find no reference to it in any publication.

of rock, held in place by two or three others. Fragments of pottery indicate that a bowl, perhaps containing water, had been placed beside each pile. Here, then, are the memorials of the travellers who set out for distant Arthet from the fair city on the island, which may from here be seen floating in the blue waters of the Nile below. These stones are the prayers of those who asked a prosperous journey from the gods of their city: from the old ram-headed Khnum who lived in the dark caverns below the Nile; from Satet, the horned goddess whose bow and arrows were the terror of her enemies; and from Anuket with the crown of lofty feathers. For a short distance one may follow the paved road now, as it passes southwards and westwards amidst the blackened rocks and golden sand-drifts of this lifeless land; but presently it tops a deeply shadowed ridge of rock and sand, and so descends into, and is lost amidst, the wide, undulating desert, ablaze with the light of the setting sun.

There are not many persons who will find themselves able to follow the road by camel, as I did, or to take ship up the Nile, to Arthet, in order to see the terminus of the first part of the highway. The road descends to the river behind the rich fields of the straggling village of Tomâs, near Derr,

the present capital of Lower Nubia. The scenery here is beautiful in the extreme. A short distance down-stream a bluff of rock, projecting to the water's edge, and half-covered with drift-sand, marks the probable boundary between Arthet and Sethu. One might slide here from the top of the bluff down the golden slopes to the verdant thorn-bushes which dip towards the river, and from either side of the track one's figure would be seen sharply against the deep blue of the sky. Sliding, one would see on the left the rocks and the sand of Sethu, and distantly the superb array of the mountains of Wawat; while on the right the green bay into which the road descended would lie spread as a feast to the eye. Farther up-stream a wooded island lies in the Nile, whither the inhabitants must often have fled at the approach of the Egyptians from the desert.

On the low cliffs which form the backing of this bay many a captain of an expedition or master of a caravan has written his name, and sometimes a date has been added. "The Superintendent of all the caravan-conductors of the Land of the South: Sabna"; "the Captain of the Soldiers: Akab"; "the Captain of the ships of Asesa: Khnumhotep"; "the sixth year: written by the Captain of the soldiers . . ."; these are examples of the

The Elephantine Road, looking along it towards Aswân.—Page 182.

View of the islands in the river, &c., from near the Inscribed Rock at the head of the Elephantine Road.

inscriptions which were here cut into the surface of the rock, and which to the archæologist are of the first importance. A caravan-conductor named Ara, who is probably to be identified with the father of Herkhuf, has left his name here; and more than one Sabna occurs. But perhaps the most interesting of these records are three short inscriptions which tell of an expedition to Arthet under the almost unknown Pharaoh Hornefersa, who probably reigned about B.C. 2400. It is in one of these inscriptions that the name of this country—Arthet—is given, thereby making it possible definitely to locate the territory of these people, and to identify this highway without any further question with the "Elephantine road" referred to in the inscriptions as leading from Elephantine to Arthet.

Above these rocks one steps on to the hard surface of the desert, and the eye may travel over the broken ground to the north for many a mile, and may follow the road by which Herkhuf carried home his pigmy, and Sabna his father's body, until the brown rocks meet the blue sky. To the south-west the second portion of the highway, leading on to Aam, may be followed; but the point at which it descends again to the river has not been identified, though one may safely say that the terminus

lay between Abu Simbel and the Second Cataract. Here the country has a different aspect. On the west bank of the Nile the sand lies thickly, and humps itself into low hillocks covered with scrub. Between these one may walk in the cool shade of groves of sunt and tamarisk, where flocks of goats stand dreaming on the pathway and birds sing overhead. On the east bank isolated hills of sandstone rise suddenly from the plain, and are reflected in the river as in a flawless mirror. The land of Aam is as beautiful as that of Arthet, though altogether different in character.

The later history of the highway cannot be traced in much detail. From the VIIth to the XIIth Dynasties the Egyptian Government was seldom strong enough at home to attempt to look after affairs abroad, and Lower Nubia relapsed into a state of independence. Amonemhat, the founder of the XIIth Dynasty, about 2000 B.C., was thus obliged to reconquer the country; but his expedition seems to have travelled up the Nile and not across the desert. A few reigns later a fortress was built at the modern Anâybeh, in the land of Arthet, a few miles above the terminus of the highway from Elephantine; and the road must now have been used continuously as the express route from the city to the fortress. This

stronghold is so much ruined and sand-covered that it has escaped observation up till now, although its position had been ascertained from inscriptions. Mention is made of a fortress named Taray, and its distance from a certain known place is given, which exactly locates it at Anâybeh. At about the same date a large fortress was built on the west bank at the Second Cataract, and at the extreme north end of the highroad the walls of Elephantine were now strengthened.

Above the Second Cataract lay the land of Kush, and as civilisation advanced southwards the territory of the Ghosts had perforce to retreat before it. The Egyptians now knew that very human negroes inhabited the country beyond Aam; but they could still ask themselves in whispers what manner of bogies dwelt to the south of Kush. While the immortals were falling back, however, the mortals from above the Second Cataract were surely pushing forward. The people of Aam were slowly being displaced by them, and in consequence were hustling the tribes of Arthet. During the reign of Senusert III. (1887 B.C.) the incursions of the negroes of Kush assumed the proportions of an invasion, and the Egyptians were obliged to wage an expensive and lengthy

war upon them. When at last they were driven back beyond the Second Cataract, the Pharaoh set up a boundary-stone there; and the words which he ordered to be inscribed upon it show plainly enough what a surprise it was to him to find that his enemies had possessed none of those superhuman powers which his subjects had attributed to them.

"Why," he says, "they are not a mighty people after all; they are poor and broken in heart. My majesty has seen them; it is not an untruth. I captured their women, I carried off their subjects, went forth to their wells, smote their bulls. I reaped their grain, and set fire thereto. I swear as my father lives for me I speak in truth, without a lie therein coming out of my mouth."

The last sentence tells of the king's fear lest tradition should conquer proven fact, and his soldiers should endow the negroes of Kush with those mysterious powers of which their close proximity to the Land of the Ghosts and the end of the world gave them the use.

During the XVIIIth Dynasty (1580-1350 B.C.) the highroad was used continuously both by the troops which were being launched against the Sudân, and by the officials who came to collect the taxes or to administer the laws. Great changes had taken place since the old days.

The Land of the Ghosts had disappeared almost entirely from the geography, though still it might exist somewhere above Khartûm. The people of Aam, now more correctly called Emaam, had entirely absorbed Arthet, and Sethu had fallen to the share of Wawat. Persons travelling by the highroad, and descending to the river at Tomâs or near the Second Cataract, found themselves in the sphere of influence of Emaam at either place. One obtains some idea of the inhabitants of this once mysterious land from a painting in the tomb of Huy, the viceroy of the south, at Thebes. Here one sees a procession of negro princes who have come to do homage to the Pharaoh's representative. They have evidently travelled by the highroad, for the Prince of Emaam rides in a heavy chariot drawn by two bulls, while his retinue walk behind him. A prince of Wawat is also shown; while the chieftains of Kush are there in numbers, bringing with them the produce of their country. Their clothes are more or less Egyptian in style, and their wealth in gold is such as an Egyptian's eyes might stare at. In this sober, prosperous company one looks in vain for a sign of that savage ferocity which made them the terror of Elephantine.

In the XIXth Dynasty (1350-1205 B.C.), when

the armies of Rameses the Great and his successors passed up to the wars in the Sudân, the Elephantine road must have been one of the main routes of communication. The name of Rameses the Great is writ large upon the rocks of Tomâs, in contrast to the modest little records of those infinitely greater men of the early days. Not so long afterwards it was the people of the Sudân who were using the road to march on Egypt, and soon the Egyptians were obliged to bow the knee to a negro Pharaoh. Later, when they were once more the masters of their own affairs, the tax-gatherers returned to Emaam, and the names of some have been left on the road.

At this time Elephantine had become a city of considerable wealth and importance. Splendid temples rose amidst the houses and the trees, and fortified walls around the south end of the island frowned down upon the swift river. Priests, soldiers, and nobles walked the streets amongst the throng of the townspeople, or sailed to and fro over the broken waters. At the foot of the western hills, the bay from which the Nubian highway ran must have often been the scene of the busy loading and unloading of pack-donkeys; and at this time there may have been a masonry

landing-stage at the river's edge to terminate worthily the paved causeway.

Then came the Greeks and the Romans, and one may picture perspiring legionaries hastening along the highroad to join Petronius in his chase of the one-eyed queen Candace and her flying Ethiopians. One may see the agents of Shems-ed-Dulah, the brother of Saladin, passing along to rout out Christianity from Nubia; and presently come the barbaric Mamelukes, driven before the armies of Ibrahim Pasha. The last great scene in the long history of this most ancient highroad was enacted a score of years ago. The Dervishes,—the modern inhabitants of the Land of the Ghosts,—marching on Egypt from the Sudân, picked up the road at the Second Cataract, at its early terminus, and headed towards Tomâs. An English force, travelling southwards, met and utterly defeated them some seven miles back from the river, behind the village of Tôshkeh, not far from Abu Simbel. And if one journeys direct from the ancient land of Arthet to the land of Aam, the bones of the dead and the *débris* of their camp will be found strewn to right and left over the surface of the highway.

Travelling in Egypt one sees so many remains

of the solemn religious ceremonies of the ancient Egyptians, and reading at home one meets with so many representations of the sacred rites, that it is a real relief to come across some relic, such as this highroad, of human energy and toil. In the courts of the temples one has pictured the processions of the priests and the kneeling throng of the people. One has heard in the imagination the rhythmic chants, has smelt the heavy incense, and has seen the smoke of the sacrifice rising to the roof. Glum Pharaohs have stalked across the picture, raising their stiff hands to the dull gods; and rows of bedraggled prisoners have been led to the sanctuary, roped in impossible contortions. One has visited, or has read of, a thousand tombs; and the slow funerals have passed before one in depressing array. But here on this highroad over the western hills, where the north wind blows free and the kites circle and call above one, where there comes vigour into the limbs and ambition into the heart, these relics of old adventures appeal with wonderful force. Here there are no mysteries except the mystery of the land to the south, and there are no prayers save the asking of a successful journey, and the piling of four stones to the honour of the gods. One does not pace through holy places whispering "How weird!" but stick

in hand, and whistling a tune down the wind, one follows in the footsteps of the bold caravan-masters of the past; and one thanks them from the bottom of one's heart for having played a man's part on their page of the world's history to serve for all time as an example. When the amusements of the luxurious hotels have given out, and the solemnity of the ancient ruins has begun to pall, the spirits of Herkhuf and of Sabna, of the captains and the caravan-conductors, are always to be found waiting on the breezy hill-tops behind the island of Elephantine, at the head of the Nubian highway.

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